# THIRTY-SIX
# Select DISCOURSES
# Doctrinal *and* Practical;
Upon the moſt
# IMPORTANT POINTS
OF THE
# Chriſtian Religion.

*VIZ.*

I. The Great Concern of a Future State after the Diſſolution of this World.
II. The Excellency and divine Practice of celebrating the Feſtivals and Faſts of the Church of *England*.
III. The true Principles of Chriſtian Obedience, conſidered under the Articles of Faith, Fear, Hope, and Love. Alſo the Order and Connection of our Saviour's Beatitudes.
IV. The right Way to Chriſtian Perfection: Shewing the Obligations, Means, and Motives to a continued Progreſs and Perſeverance in Faith and Holineſs.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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# THE PREFACE.

*THERE is no Occaſion, I preſume, of making any Apology for publiſhing Diſcourſes on ſuch weighty and important Subjects, as muſt be uſeful and ſeaſonable at* all *Times; and cannot therefore be thought unſeaſonable, and will not, I truſt, be unſerviceable in the* preſent. *The Deſign of them is to render the great Objects of Futurity more plain and familiar to the Minds of Chriſtians; and to invite them to the Search and Study of ſuch Truths, as are worthy their Thoughts and Contemplation; ſuch*

*as will help to purify their Hearts, to ſtrengthen and increaſe their Faith, to influence and regulate their Practice, to quicken their Zeal, and to engage their Attention to the awakening Calls and Workings of Providence.*

*The Diſcourſes are plain and ſhort, and fitted for general Uſe; and to make them more ſo, I have either wholly omitted, or but barely mentioned, ſome curious and diſputable Points that came in my way. But there is* one *relating to the Subject of the Three firſt Sermons, which I ſhall take Occaſion, in this Place, to attempt a Solution of. The Point is this* —At what Time *we are to ſuppoſe the* Burning of the World *will commence, whether* before *or* after *the Millennium? There are two different Opinions concerning this Matter; and each Opinion is attended with conſiderable Difficulties, in Appearance, I mean,*

*tho*

*tho' not in Reality. Thoſe who ſuppoſe that the Earth, and all things therein, will be burnt up* before *the firſt Reſurrection, or* before *the Millennial State begins; and that the* New Heavens *and the* New Earth *will be raiſed upon the Ruins of the Old, have theſe two Difficulties to encounter:* 1. *They muſt find out ſome Place, where to ſecure from the fiery Deluge that numerous Body of Chriſtians, who will be added to the Church in the latter Days by the general Converſion of the* Jews, *and the Coming in, of the Fulneſs of the* Gentiles. *For it is not to be imagined, that all theſe will be gone down to the Grave, before this great Change in the Earth be wrought. And where ſhall theſe be, when the World is in Flames?* 2. *Since all the wicked Inhabitants of the Earth then living, are to be conſumed by the ſame Fire, by which the Earth itſelf*

*ſhall be deſtroyed; and yet we read, that at the End of the thouſand Years* Satan *will be looſed, and gather together an innumerable Army, like the Sand of the Sea, from the four Quarters of the Earth, and come and beſiege the beloved City*; the Queſtion here is,* from whence *all theſe numerous Forces are to ariſe, when the Old Earth, with all the corrupt Dwellers upon it, is ſuppoſed to be deſtroyed before, and the New Earth to be inhabited by none but the Saints?*

Secondly, *Thoſe who place the Burning of the World at the Expiration of the Thouſand Years, have this Difficulty to get over, namely, To find out a New Heavens and a New Earth,* without *the Deſtruction and Conſumption of the Old. The* New Jeruſalem *muſt then be ſuppoſed to come down upon the*

* Rev. xx. 9.

*preſent*

*preſent Earth, and in the ſame State and Condition it is now in; or the Change to be wrought muſt affect only One Part of the Earth, and not the Whole. But this is directly contrary to what St.* John *aſſerts:* I ſaw a New Heaven, and a New Earth: for the firſt was paſſed away, and there was no more Sea. And I *John* ſaw the Holy City, the *New Jeruſalem*, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a Bride, adorned for her Husband——. And he that ſat upon the Throne, ſaid, Behold, I make all Things New*. *Where nothing can be plainer, than that all the Old Earth muſt paſs away, before the New be formed; and that this will be ſo complete a Change, ſo total a Diſſolution, that One-half at leaſt of the Old World will find no Place in the New; for there will be*

* Rev. xxi. 1, 2, 5.

no more Sea. *St.* Peter *likewiſe plainly intimates, that we are not to* look for the New Heavens, and the New Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteouſneſs, before *the Old be deſtroyed by Fire. This Hypotheſis then, as it implies that the Earth* will not *be diſſolved* before *the Expiration of the Millennial State, is utterly irreconcileable with thoſe plain Paſſages of Scripture, which ſpeak of the Millennium as* ſucceeding *and following immediately upon that Diſſolution. But* ſo far *as it only ſuppoſes, that* after *the Thouſand Years are expired, the Earth that then is, will be conſumed by Fire, this may be found to be no way inconſiſtent with Reaſon or Revelation. The Scripture often ſpeaks of Two diſtinct and diſtant Events under one and the ſame general Form of Expreſſion, as of the* firſt *and* ſecond *Advent of* Chriſt, *of the* firſt *and* ſe-

cond

cond *Reſurrection*, *a* particular *and a* general *Judgment*, *a* myſtical *and a* perſonal *Antichriſt*, *and the like*; *and why theſe may not be a* firſt *and a* ſecond *Conflagration*, *no ſufficient Reaſon*, *I believe*, *can be aſſigned. There is a* Neceſſity *for the Firſt*, *in order to purge the Earth from the Contagion of Sin*, *and deliver it from the Effects of the Curſe*, *and prepare it for that* New Paradiſe, *which is to be formed out of its fiery Remains*, *as the Old one was out of the Watry-Chaos. And there is the greateſt* Probability *for the ſecond. For when the Time is come for the Saints to be received up into Heaven*, *there can then be no farther Need or Occaſion for the Earth*, *ſo far as we are able to judge. Both the* Inviſible *and the* New Terreſtrial *Paradiſe*, *both the* Middle *and* Millennial *States*, *are deſigned to prepare and train Men up*

*for*

*for the Enjoyment of an* eternal Inheritance, *for the Viſion and Fruition of God in Heaven. And as that Part of* Hades, *which is now the Receptacle of pious Souls departed, (called in Scripture* Paradiſe, *and* Abraham's Boſom) *will be deſerted, and left quite deſtitute of Inhabitants, when the Saints take Poſſeſſion of the* New Jeruſalem: *So the* New Jeruſalem *itſelf, after the End of the* Millennial *State, will be relinquiſhed likewiſe for brighter Manſions, and a better Country, that is,* a Heavenly. *There muſt indeed ſtill remain, upon the Breadth of the whole Earth, vaſt Numbers of the ungodly Race, as the Wives, Children, Friends, Servants, and other Dependents of the Army of* Gog *and* Magog, *who encompaſſed the Camp of the Saints. For we cannot imagine, that all theſe will leave their Habitations, and attend that*

*Army*

*Army of Rebels againſt God. And as this Army will be wholly deſtroyed by a ſignal and immediate Vengeance (for ſo St.* John *expreſly aſſerts* —— And Fire came down from God out of Heaven, and devoured them *); *ſo we may very juſtly conclude, that Thoſe they leave behind, Thoſe, I mean, who have rejected, or apoſtatized from, the Faith of* Chriſt, *will meet with ſomething of the like exemplary Judgment: But then as the* New Earth *will be ſtained and polluted by theſe wicked Generations of Men, it is not their Deſtruction alone that can cleanſe and purify it, or fulfil the Curſe that will then be due to it; and therefore we may well ſuppoſe, that it will be made to undergo the ſame Fate, as the Old Earth had underwent before, and be diſſolved in the Fire of God's Indignation. Theſe Reaſons may*

* Rev. xx. 9.

*ſuffice*

*ſuffice to ſhew the* Probability *at leaſt, of a* ſecond *general Conflagration.*

*As to the Two other Difficulties which occur, upon ſuppoſing that the Earth will be burnt up* before *and in* order *to the Millennial State, the firſt of them reſpecting the Place or Reſidence of the Saints, while the World is Burning, may be eaſily ſolved from Two Paſſages of St.* Paul—Behold, I ſhew you a Myſtery; we ſhall not all ſleep, but we ſhall all be changed in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye, at the laſt Trump *.—Then we which are alive, and remain, ſhall be caught up together with them in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air §. *So that the Righteous, which ſhall be found alive at* Chriſt's *Coming, are not to undergo Death, but only a Change; and their Bodies thereby being rendred ſpiritual,*

* 1 Cor. xv. 52. § 1 Theſ. iv. 17.

*vigorous,*

*vigorous, and immortal, will be tranſlated into ſome of the upper Regions, before the general Conflagration begins, there to become Spectators of this wondrous Scene of Divine Judgment, and be preſent at the Formation of the New World, as the Angels were at the Formation of the Old.*

*The only remaining Difficulty relates to the numerous Company of* Gog *and* Magog, *who are ſaid to be* as the Sand of the Sea *for Multitude; and which can neither be ſuppoſed to ſurvive the Conflagration of the old World, nor to be generated in the New; and therefore muſt come from ſome other Place or State. For a Solution of this Difficulty, the few following Hints will, I hope, be ſufficient.*

1. *It is certain, that great Part of the* Heathen *World was never favoured with the Light or Uſe of the Goſpel;*

*and*

*and that Multitudes of Gentiles in every Age of Chriſtianity have gone to the Grave, without having the Knowledge of* Chriſt *communicated to them; and yet our bleſſed Saviour has plainly and fully declared, that* this Goſpel of the Kingdom ſhall be preached in all the World for a Witneſs unto all Nations, and then ſhall the End come *. *Thoſe of the* Gentiles *therefore who died in Ignorance of the* Chriſtian *Diſpenſation, may have a Time of Probation allowed them,* after *they are raiſed from the Dead. I am not Alone, or the Firſt, in this Sentiment or Suppoſition: A judicious and pious Author has profeſſedly argued this Point before; and gives theſe Two Reaſons, why this merciful Purpoſe of God towards the* Heathens *is not expreſly or particularly Revealed in the Scriptures:* 1. *Becauſe*

* Matt. xxiv. 14.

*their*

*their Reſurrection and Probation upon ſuch Reſurrection, neither does nor can concern thoſe, who* have *the Scriptures: For by thoſe Scriptures* they *may come to the Knowledge of the Saviour in this Life, which is as much as concerns* them. *And,* 2. *Had this Reſurrection and Probation been* put *into the Scriptures, yet thoſe who had* not *thoſe Scriptures in* this *Life, could, for that Reaſon, have known* nothing *of the Matter in* this *Life; and ſo, as to* them, *as well as to the* others, *it had been put into the Scriptures in* vain **. The* Gentiles *therefore who ſhall be raiſed from the Dead during the* Millennium, *may have the Goſpel tendered to them upon the ſame Terms that it has been tendered to us, and by ſome Preachers ſent out for that Purpoſe from the* New Jeru-

* *See* Staynoe of Salvation, *in his* Short Inquiry, *at the End of* Vol. I. p. 426.

ſalem:

ſalem: *And their final Judgment will proceed upon their accepting or refuſing this moſt gracious Tender of Salvation. And that their Probation may be the ſame as ours has been, Satan will have Liberty to tempt them, even after they have accepted and embraced the Goſpel. And his Endeavours this way, we find by the Event, will prove too ſucceſsful. Many of them, no doubt, will ſtand firm, and retain their Integrity: But the Number of them who will be* deceived *is repreſented* as the Sand of the Sea.

*Therefore,* 2. *I obſerve that this exceeding great Number, ſo far beyond any that ever dwelt* at once *upon the Face of the Earth, is a ſtrong preſumptive Argument, that this Number conſiſts wholly of Perſons raiſed from the Dead; and that theſe Perſons are* Gentiles *and* Heathens, *who have lived*

*lived in the ſeveral Ages of the World, and ſuch as never had the Means of knowing* Chriſt *(either as* come, *or* to come) *in their Life-time.*

3. *This Account ſeems to be moſt natural and reaſonable; as it ſerves mightily to eaſe and ſatisfy our labouring Minds, concerning the otherwiſe very puzzling and myſterious Diſtribution of God's Grace and Favour to the* Gentile-Nations; *and as it likewiſe tends very much to reconcile the ſeeming Inconſiſtency between his Divine Attributes of Wiſdom, Juſtice, and Mercy, and to give us a clear and lively Apprehenſion of his paſt and preſent Diſpenſations, and future Judgment, with reſpect to the* Heathen *World. For unleſs he would have uſed Force and Compulſion, and violated his own Laws of Creation, and broke in upon the free Agency of his Creatures,*

*or have interpoſed by a continued Series of Miracles, it was morally impoſſible for the Goſpel to be duly preached and propagated in every Age and Nation, conſidering the violent Averſion, Oppoſition, and Repugnancy of* Heathen *Princes to give it either Reception or Toleration. What therefore could not but* neceſſarily *be wanting in the* preſent *State of Things, will, by the wonderful Providence and gracious Purpoſe of God, be fully ſupplied and made up* after *the Reſurrection. And thoſe* Heathens *who were hindered from believing, receiving, or even hearing the Goſpel, through the Infidelity, Obduracy, or Tyranny of the Princes they lived under, will now have the Liberty to hear and believe, without any ſuch Obſtacle or Obſtruction. And even Satan himſelf ſhall not have Power to tempt or moleſt them, till*



*ſome*

*ſome conſiderable Time after they have embraced and made Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith, or had Means and Opportunity of ſo doing. And then, as they retain, reject, or depart from this, they will ſoon after, by the moſt righteous Judgment of God, receive their Doom accordingly; and be either taken into the Number of his Elect, or have their Portion with* HYPOCRITES *and* UNBELIEVERS.

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# SERMON I.

## The Burning of the World.

2 PET. iii. 11, 12.

*Seeing then that all theſe Things ſhall be diſſolv'd, what manner of Perſons ought ye to be in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs; looking for, and haſtening to, the Coming of the Day of God?*

IF Men would ſeriouſly and frequently conſider the laſt End, and final Conſummation, of all Things; if they did but remember, that all Things which are ſeen, are *Temporal*, and muſt have an End, and that this World is drawing, every Day, nearer and nearer to the Time of its Diſſolution: That the preſent Scene of Things, which

affords now ſuch Variety of Joys and Delights, will be changed into a ghaſtly Scene of Horror, Burning, and Deſolation; and that poſſibly much ſooner than they are willing to believe, or apt to imagine: Did they reflect, as they ought, that where they have ſinned, they may be puniſh'd; that the Place of their Voluptuouſneſs may become the Place of their Torment; and that when God comes to judge the World, the Earth, and all Things therein, will be burnt up, and no Traces or Footſteps left of all the Works, Acquiſitions, and Treaſures, of all the Arts, Inventions, and Labours of Men under the Sun: Did they, I ſay, but duly weigh and ponder theſe things, and ſeriouſly lay them to Heart, they would want neither Pattern, nor Preacher, to remind them of their Duty: Their own foreboding Minds would ſufficiently admoniſh and inſtruct them: Their Senſes, as well as their Faith, would direct them to the right Way, in which they ſhould walk. 'Tis next to impoſſible for Men to believe and expect ſuch mighty Changes and Revolutions in the natural World, without growing better under ſuch Belief and Expectation, without being diſpoſed, in ſome meaſure

meaſure, to make Preparation for this awful Seaſon. Men may make a Shift to throw off the Belief of Things, altogether diſtant and unſeen, and ſhew little or no Regard to the untried Power of an Inviſible Being; they may think they have Strength enough to bear up againſt the Troubles and Preſſures of this Life, and be able to fortify their Minds againſt the Fears of the common and ordinary Kinds of Death: But the Diſſolution of the whole Frame of Nature, the Coming of *Chriſt* in the Clouds of Heaven, the Burning of the World, and Eternal Judgment, are too powerful and tremendous to be reſiſted or deſpiſed. As theſe are *Spectacles* that will rouze and ſtartle the moſt ſtupid and profane, the moſt daring and hardened Sinner: So are they *Subjects*, that, when duly attended to, will both ſearch and cleanſe the Heart, deaden the Affections to this World, kindle a holy Zeal, provoke true Contrition and Amendment, and heal the Wounds they make with the ſpiritual Balm of ghoſtly Counſel, and ſolid Conſolation. The World can do us no Good, by being ſeen and enjoy'd, in all its preſent Pomp and Splendor; but may be of ſome

Service and Advantage to us, when view'd and contemplated in its laſt dying State, filled and ſurrounded with devouring Flames, and wounding and puniſhing thoſe Senſes it uſed to gratify. Then it will appear to be, as it really is, the Stage and Theatre of Sin and Corruption, and the juſt Mark and Monument of God's fiery Indignation. *Seeing then, that all theſe Things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of Perſons ought ye to be in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs; looking for, and haſtening to, the Coming of the Day of God?* In order to explain and inforce this powerful Motive, and pathetick Exhortation of the Apoſtle, I propoſe to do theſe four Things: (1.) I ſhall conſider what *the Diſſolution of all Things*, here mentioned, does import. (2.) That we ought to be fully perſuaded of the *Certainty* of this univerſal Diſſolution. (3.) That we ſhould take heed, that we be not deceived, by thinking this Diſſolution at a great Diſtance off; but rather live in a conſtant Expectation of it, *looking for, and haſtening to, the Coming of the Day of God.* And then, (4.) As the neceſſary Reſult and Conſequence of ſuch Principles, Perſuaſions, and Expectations, we

we ſhall be moved to walk more warily in theſe dangerous Days, *in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs.* (1.) Then, I am to conſider what the Diſſolution of all Things, here mentioned, does import——*Seeing then, that all theſe Things ſhall be diſſolved.*

What St. *Peter* means by *all theſe things*, and what by their being *diſſolved*, he tells us in the Verſes before and after, namely, that *the Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great Noiſe, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat; the Earth alſo, and the Works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up.* So that what our Saviour ſaid to his Diſciples concerning the Buildings of the Temple, *Seeſt thou theſe great Buildings? Verily, I ſay unto you, there ſhall not be left here one Stone upon another, that ſhall not be thrown down*; ſo may we ſay of this ancient Building of God, the Fabrick of this material and viſible World; *Seeſt thou not all theſe things?* The glorious Luminaries above, the Earth and the Sea beneath, the lofty Mountains, and the laſting Hills, the Foreſts, Woods, and Groves, the ſtately Palaces, beautiful Churches, magnificent Houſes, and all the Monuments of Fame and Antiquity?

There are none of theſe, but will be made to bear a Part in the general Diſſolution, and either be utterly diſſolv'd themſelves, or undergo violent Convulſions, and great Diſorder and Confuſion. For not only this terraqueous Globe, but the heavenly Bodies themſelves, ſhall be involv'd in, or greatly ſuffer from, this fiery Deluge. Our Bleſſed Saviour aſſures us, that *the Sun ſhall* then *be darkened, and the Moon ſhall not give her Light*; that the *Stars ſhall fall from Heaven*, and that *the Powers of Heaven ſhall be ſhaken.* St. *John* tells us, that *the Sun ſhall become black as Sackcloth of Hair, and the Moon become as Blood.* St. *Peter* affirms, that *the Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great Noiſe*; by which moſt probably he means the lower Regions, or the Region of the Air; and that *the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat.* By the *Elements* ſome underſtand the *Planets*, which will then fall from Heaven, and help to increaſe the Conflagration, and to haſten the World's Deſtruction. For 'tis not to be ſuppoſed, that the Burning of the Earth alone will be ſufficient to dry up, and wholly conſume, all the Waters of the great Deep.

Deep. The Fires kindled on all the Shores, can't be ſuppoſed to reach the Middle, or even the fourth Part, of the vaſt extended Ocean. The Conſumption of this therefore muſt be effected by ſome other means, that is, by Fire coming down from Heaven, by burning Planets driven from their Orbs, by the Elements melting with fervent Heat, and by a general Inflammation in the Region of the Air; which is always fill'd, more or leſs, with fiery Vapours, and combuſtible Matter; and will then be repleniſh'd and ſupplied, like a Lamp with freſh Oil, by a continued Succeſſion of new Vapours drawn from the Earth. Theſe, mixing with the ſcorching Exhalations from below, will *cover the Deep like as with a Garment*, and, by their united Force, drain and exhauſt the immenſe Waters of the wide Sea. For when God enters upon his ſtrange Work, and has this laſt Controverſy with the Inhabitants of the World, he will ſet the jarring Elements at War and Variance with one another; and that of *Fire* ſhall at laſt prevail over, and deſtroy and ſwallow up, the other three. For, *Behold*, ſays the Prophet *Amos*, *God called to contend by Fire*,

*and it devoured the great Deep, and it eat up a Part.* And as Fire will devour the great Deep, ſo will it burn up the Earth alſo, and all that therein is; and as it will thus devour the Waters, and burn up the Earth; ſo will it likewiſe conſume the preſent Atmoſphere, or the Region of the Air round about us, that has been ſo much tainted and infected by the poiſonous Breath of Sin. So that the ſeveral viſible Parts of the Creation will be involved all at once in circling and checquer'd Streams of Smoke and Flames. For this is that Day of Vengeance, that Day of the Lord, ſo often mentioned, and ſo fully deſcribed by the Prophets, as *a Day of great Wrath, a Day of Trouble and Diſtreſs, a Day of Waſtneſs and Deſolation, a Day of Darkneſs and Gloomineſs, a Day of Clouds and thick Darkneſs; a Day of the Trumpet and Alarm againſt the fenced Cities, and againſt the high Towers.* And, *I will bring Diſtreſs upon Men,* ſays God, *that they ſhall walk like blind Men, becauſe they have ſinned againſt the Lord; and their Blood ſhall be poured out as Duſt, and their Fleſh as the Dung. Neither their Silver, nor their Gold ſhall be able to deliver them*

*in the Day of the Lord's Wrath; but the whole Land ſhall be devoured by the Fire of his Jealouſy: For he ſhall make even a ſpeedy Riddance of all them that dwell in the Land.* If it be ask'd, How, or by what means, the Righteous ſhall be preſerv'd in the midſt of a burning World, or where they ſhall be at this Time? I anſwer with St. *Paul*, that before the World is on Fire, they ſhall be *caught up in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air*; and being there placed out of the Reach, and above the Surges of the fiery Deluge, they ſhall be made Spectators of this amazing Scene of Ruin and Deſolation, and ſee this grand Idol of Mankind conſuming in the Fire of God's Indignation, breaking and tumbling in Pieces, like *Dagon* before the Ark, and at laſt buried in its own Rubbiſh, or reduced to a fiery Chaos. Of this *Jeremiah* gives us a lively Deſcription in the following Words——— *I beheld the Earth, and lo, it was without Form and void; and the Heavens, and they had no Light. I beheld the Mountains, and lo, they trembled, and all the Hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no Man, and all the Birds of the Heaven were fled. I beheld,*

*held, and lo, the fruitful Place was a Wilderneſs, and all the Cities thereof were broken down, at the Preſence of the Lord, and by his fierce Anger.* But then this general Deſolation prevailing no farther than to the Sea, Earth, and Air, or lower Heavens, thoſe more diſtant Luminaries, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, will not partake of the ſame Fate, or ſuffer the like Diſſolution, but only undergo ſome frightful Changes and Alterations, become ſhaking and trembling, and covered with Darkneſs, to ſympathize, as it were, in this univerſal Conſternation and Confuſion of Nature. But the greateſt Confuſion and Conſternation will be in the Minds and Hearts of Men. When *Deſtruction upon Deſtruction* ſhall be cried, then Laughter will be turned into Mourning, and Joy into Heavineſs. Then the *Merry-hearted will ſigh; every Houſe will be ſhut up; all Joy will be darkened, the Mirth of the Land will ceaſe:* Yea, *all Hands ſhall faint, and every Man's Heart ſhall melt. They ſhall be amazed one at another: Their Faces ſhall be as Flames, and all Faces ſhall gather Blackneſs.* If they look to the Heavens, behold fearful Sights, and

and amazing Terrors; and if they look to the Earth, behold Trouble and Sorrow, and Dimneſs of Anguiſh. *They ſhall wait for Light, but behold Obſcurity; for Brightneſs, but ſhall walk in Darkneſs.* Yea, *they ſhall ſtumble at Noon-day, as if they had no Eyes; and be in deſolate Places, as dead Men. They ſhall roar all like Bears, and mourn ſore like Doves; they ſhall look for Mercy, but there is none; for Salvation, but it is far off from them.* Therefore ſhall their Hearts melt for Fear and Trouble: *They ſhall reel to and fro, and ſtagger like a drunken Man, and be at their Wits end.* They ſhall flee to the Mountains, and climb upon the Trees, and come down again to the Valleys beneath; but where-ever they go, there is no Safety; and where they ſeek for Refuge, they ſhall meet Deſtruction. For the very Powers of Heaven ſhall be ſhaken, and threaten them with immediate Vengeance, and the Pillars of the round World ſhall tremble under them. For thus ſaith the Prophet, *Fear, and the Pit, and the Snare are upon thee, O Inhabitant of the Earth; and it ſhall come to paſs, that he who fleeth from the Noiſe of the Fear, ſhall fall into the Pit; and he*

*that cometh up out of the midſt of the Pit, ſhall be taken in the Snare; for the Windows from on high are open, and the Foundations of the Earth do ſhake. The Earth is utterly broken down, the Earth is clean diſſolved, the Earth is moved exceedingly. The Earth ſhall reel to and fro like a Drunkard, and ſhall be removed like a Cottage; and the Tranſgreſſion thereof ſhall be heavy upon it, and it ſhall fall, and not riſe again.* From which laſt Words we can't but obſerve, that the meritorious Cauſe of all this wide Deſolation, and univerſal Ruin and Confuſion, is the Sin of Man. 'Twas this that cauſed the Deſtruction of the Old World by a Flood of Waters; and 'tis for this that the World, which now is, will be deſtroy'd by Fire. 'Tis this that will ſet the Elements at the greateſt Variance with Mankind, and with one another, and arm all the Creatures of God againſt them. For this the Sun ſhall be confounded, and the Moon aſhamed, and the Earth and the Inhabitants thereof abandoned, and delivered up to the Overflowings of the Curſe. *For Wickedneſs burneth as the Fire: It ſhall devour the Briers and Thorns, and ſhall kindle in the Thickets*

*Thickets of the Foreſt, and they ſhall mount up like the lifting up of Smoke. Through the Wrath of the Lord of Hoſts is the Land darkened, and the People ſhall be as the Fewel of the Fire. For behold, the Day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with Wrath and fierce Anger, to lay the Land deſolate, and he ſhall deſtroy the Sinners out of it. For the Stars of Heaven, and the Conſtellations thereof, ſhall not give their Light. The Sun ſhall be darkened in his going forth, and the Moon ſhall not cauſe her Light to ſhine. And I will puniſh the World for their Evil, and the Wicked for their Iniquity; and I will cauſe the Arrogancy of the Proud to ceaſe, and will lay low the Haughtineſs of the Terrible; and the Lord alone ſhall be exalted in that Day.*

Thus you ſee what *the Diſſolution of all Things*, according to the Scriptures, does plainly ſignify and import, not a bare Change and Alteration, but a total Subverſion of the preſent Frame of Nature *; being *kept in Store*, as St. *Peter* affirms, *by the Word of God, and reſerved unto Fire, againſt the*

* To prevent Miſtakes, I here add, that by the *preſent Frame of Nature*, I mean no more than the *Earth* and its *Atmoſphere*.

*Day*

*Day of Judgment, and Perdition of ungodly Men.* But as to the Righteous, they have nothing to fear at this awful Seaſon. On the contrary, when theſe things *begin to come to paſs*, they are bid to *look up, and lift up their Heads with Joy, becauſe their Redemption draweth nigh.* The Coming of Chriſt, and the Burning of the World, will be terrible and fatal only to the Impenitent and Unprepared. And conſidering the great Uncertainty of the Time of our Lord's Coming, all Delays of Repentance muſt be dangerous, and may be attended with the moſt dreadful Conſequences: And we can never be ſafe, till we are, in ſome meaſure, ready and diſpoſed to receive any ſudden Summons to Death or Judgment. We can't therefore begin *too ſoon*, or take *too much Pains* to arm and ſecure ourſelves againſt ſuch amazing and formidable Evils, as *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles have plainly foretold, and given us fair Warning of.

What ſpecial Duties and Preparations are neceſſary for this Purpoſe, will come in Order to be conſidered under the laſt Head of Diſcourſe I propoſed to ſpeak to. At preſent, I ſhall only recommend to you the Duty

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of *frequent Communion*, as the beſt Defence and Preſervative againſt all Dangers, whether they relate to us in a private Capacity, or to the State of the World in general, or to the Place and Nation whereto we belong; whether they reſpect the preſent or the future Time, the Hour of Death, or the Day of Judgment. In all theſe Caſes, nothing can better arm and fortify our Minds againſt the Danger of a Surprize, than keeping our Accounts clear with God; and nothing tends more to this, than frequent and worthy Receiving of the Lord's Supper. It was the Blood of the Paſchal Lamb ſprinkled on the Poſts of the Door, that was the Means of preſerving the *Iſraelites* from the deſtroying Angel, which ſlew all the Firſt-born of the *Egyptians*: And it was the Blood of *Chriſt* ſhed on the Croſs, that firſt quench'd the Flames of God's Indignation againſt Sinners, and that muſt ſecure us from the Flames of a burning World, and from the Fire that never ſhall be quench'd. The Primitive Chriſtians, by the daily or frequent Uſe of the Holy Sacrament, and by the Virtue and Efficacy derived to their Souls from thence, kept themſelves in conſtant Readineſs for their

their great Change, and were always prepared to lay down their Lives for the ſake of *Chriſt* and his Goſpel. And thoſe Means which were proper to prepare them for a State and Crown of *Martyrdom*, will be found the moſt proper to qualify us for meeting our Lord, either at the *general Diſſolution* of all Things, or at the Time of *our own Diſſolution*. Let us then neglect no more of theſe precious Opportunities; but bleſs God for the Mercy and Favour of them, and endeavour for the future to make a better Uſe and Improvement of them, that ſo we may have our Accounts always in Readineſs, and keep our Souls in a due State of Preparation to meet and receive our Bleſſed Redeemer, that whenever he comes, he may find us innocently, or piouſly, or uſefully employ'd: *And bleſſed are thoſe Servants, whom their Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find ſo doing.*

*Now to God the* FATHER, *God the* SON, *and God the* HOLY GHOST, *Three Perſons and One* GOD, *be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, and Glory, Might, Majeſty, Obedience, and Thankſgiving, now, henceforth, and for evermore.* Amen.

SER-

# SERMON II.

## The Burning of the World.

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## The Burning of the World.

2 PET. iii. 11, 12.

*Seeing then that all theſe Things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of Perſons ought ye to be in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs; looking for, and haſtening to, the Coming of the Day of God?*

IN order to explain and inforce this powerful Motive, and pathetick Exhortation of the Apoſtle, I propoſed to do theſe four Things: (1.) To conſider what the *Diſſolution of all Things*, here mentioned, does import. (2.) That we ought to be fully perſuaded of the *Certainty* of this Diſſolution. (3.) That we

ſhould take heed, that we be not deceived, by thinking this Diſſolution at a great Diſtance off; but rather live in conſtant Expectation of it, *looking for, and haſtening to, the Coming of the Day of God.* And then, (4.) As the neceſſary Reſult and Conſequence of ſuch Principles, Perſuaſions, and Expectations, we ſhall be moved to walk more warily in theſe dangerous Days, *in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs.*

'Twas only the firſt of theſe Heads that I conſidered in my laſt Diſcourſe. What I am to conſider in the next Place is, that we ought to be fully perſuaded of the *Certainty* of this univerſal Diſſolution: And that more eſpecially in theſe Days, that we may not lie expoſed to the Attacks of Infidels, and fall into the Snare of the Devil, that we may not be in Danger of being ſcared or laughed out of our Religion: For *Scoffers* there have been in all Ages: There were ſome in the Apoſtles Days, who objected againſt the Truth of theſe Things, and were forward to demand, *Where is the Promiſe of his Coming? For ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation*, v. 4.

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The Objection conſiſts of two Parts; and I ſhall briefly conſider each of them. Firſt, *Where is the Promiſe of his Coming?* But it was unreaſonable for them to expect or demand *Chriſt's ſecond* Coming ſo ſoon after his *firſt*. It was but lately that he had appeared in the World; and though he promiſed to come again, yet he fixed no certain Time for his Coming. And therefore to conclude that he would not come at all, becauſe he was not yet come in thoſe early Days, was moſt unreaſonable and abſurd. 'Tis true, the firſt Chriſtians did look upon the Day of Judgment, and the Coming of *Chriſt*, to be always near at hand; and this pious Error was productive of good Fruits, and attended with happy Conſequences, with reſpect to themſelves: But then as it gave great Advantage to the Enemies of Chriſtianity, and open'd the Mouths of Unbelievers, as if the Day of the Lord, which had been ſo long expected in vain, ſhould *never come*; therefore St. *Paul* in particular, with great Earneſtneſs and Solemnity, diſclaims this Doctrine, and his being (as ſome ſuppoſed) any way acceſſary to the Belief of it.—*Now we beſeech you, Brethren,*

*Brethren, by the Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not ſoon ſhaken in Mind, or be troubled, neither by Spirit, nor by Word, nor by Letter, as from us, as that the Day of Chriſt is at hand.*—But had the Apoſtle lived in theſe Days, he would, with as much Earneſtneſs and Zeal, have renounced and diſclaimed the contrary Doctrine. For what was not true then, may be true now, *viz. That the Day of Chriſt is near at hand.* The Diſtance of *Seventeen hundred* Years makes a wide Difference in the Caſe; though the Tempers of Chriſtians, with reſpect to this Point, have been the very Reverſe of what they ought to have been. As the antient Chriſtians were *too forward*, ſo we are *too backward* to believe our Lord's ſecond Coming. They lived only, as it were, in the Beginning, or Infancy of Chriſtianity, and yet looked upon it as then come to its full Age or Maturity: And we, upon whom the Ends of the World are really come, and who actually ſee Religion in its declining State, are unwilling to believe, and almoſt angry to be told, that the Diſſolution of all Things may be

be near at hand. The Objection therefore of Infidels, as couched in this Queſtion, *Where is the Promiſe of his Coming?* is no more an Argument againſt the Truth and Certainty of *Chriſt*'s ſecond Coming, and the Conſequences that will attend it, than that inſolent Demand of the *Jews*, for our Saviour to come down from the Croſs, for their Conviction, was againſt the Truth of his Reſurrection. He did not then come down, as they deſired; but he afterwards roſe, when they would fain have kept him in the Grave. And ſo, though he may not come when Men expect or demand him, yet he may and will come *in a Day when they look not for him, and at an Hour that they are not aware of. For every thing there is a Seaſon*, eſpecially in the great Affair of our Redemption, which has been tranſacted with the exacteſt Regard to *Times and Seaſons*. There was a *Fulneſs of Time* for *Chriſt's coming into the World*, a Time for his *Death*, a Time for his *Reſurrection*, a Time for his *Aſcenſion*; and there is likewiſe a Time for his *ſecond Advent*. The Objection therefore drawn from the Delay of his Coming, is frivolous and trifling: Be-

cauſe he had not *then*, and has not *yet*, fulfilled his Promiſe, we can by no means conclude, that he *never* will. If he does not come in *this*, or in *that* Age of the World, is this a Reaſon that he will come in *none? The Lord is not ſlack concerning his Promiſe*, ſays St. *Peter*, *as ſome Men count Slackneſs*. His Calculation of Time is very different from ours. *One Day is with the Lord as a thouſand Years, and a thouſand Years as one Day.* And ſince he has deferred his Coming for near two thouſand Years already, we have the greater Cauſe to ſuppoſe, that 'twill not be deferred much longer.

The other Part of the Objection is, that *ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation.* Had this been as true, as 'tis falſe in Fact, it had been no Argument againſt the Truth of what St. *Peter* declares concerning the Diſſolution of all Things: For if there had been no Change *hitherto* in the natural World, we could not have inferred from thence, that therefore there *never* will be any. But the Apoſtle thinks it ſufficient to deny the Aſſertion,

tion, and to charge the Aſſerters with wilful affected Ignorance. *For this*, ſays he, *they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the Heavens were of old, and the Earth ſtanding out of the Water and in the Water, whereby the World that then was, being overflowed with Water, periſhed*, v. 5. So that there had been a very conſiderable Change in the World, contrary to what theſe falſe Teachers aſſerted, and which, whatever they might pretend, they could not be wholly ignorant of. And as the old World thus periſhed by Water, ſo certainly, according to St. *Peter*, ſhall the World that now is, be deſtroyed by Fire. Thoſe that believe the Holy Scriptures, can't doubt of the Truth of this: For though none of the ſacred Writers have ſo particularly and expreſly aſſerted this Doctrine, as St. *Peter*, who has given us an exact Deſcription of the Burning of the World, in the fulleſt and plaineſt manner, and with great Authority and Solemnity; yet they all occaſionally mention it, and frequently allude to it. St. *Paul* not only repreſents God in general as *a conſuming Fire*, but declares more particularly with reſpect

reſpect to the laſt Judgment, that *the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* The Prophet *Iſaiah* has this remarkable Paſſage, among others, to the ſame Purpoſe—*Behold, the Lord will come with Fire, and with his Chariots, like a Whirlwind, to render his Anger with Fury, and his Rebuke with Flames of Fire**.—The Pſalmiſt has many Expreſſions relating to the ſame Subject; and in the ſeveral Deſcriptions he gives of God's coming to Judgment, he takes Notice of this Circumſtance in particular, that *a Fire ſhall devour before him, and burn up his Enemies round about*; that *the Mountains ſhall ſhake, and the Hills melt like Wax, at the Preſence of the Lord*; that *the Channels of the Waters ſhall be ſeen, and the Foundations of the round World diſcovered at the Blaſt of the Breath of his Noſtrils*; ſo that *Coals ſhall be kindled at it.* All which, and the like Expreſſions, are plain Alluſions to the general Conflagration. And

* See particularly *Nahum* i. 5, 6.

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this Doctrine is farther confirmed to us by the Belief and Expectation of pious Chriſtians in all Ages, and in all Nations, and even by the Conſent and Acknowledgment of *Heathens* themſelves, many of which have borne expreſs Teſtimony to this Truth. And the more we ourſelves conſider it, the more Reaſon we ſhall have to believe it; and the more we believe and conſider it, the better prepared ſhall we be to *eſcape thoſe things that ſhall come upon the World, and to ſtand before the Son of Man.* And this brings me, in the

*Third* Place, to remind you of the Duty implied in the laſt Words of the Text; namely, that ſince all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, and we know not how ſoon this may happen, we ought to live in continual Expectation of it, *Looking for, and haſtening to, the Coming of the Day of God.* But as this is an Article of Faith that is quite againſt the Grain of corrupt human Nature, that croſſes the Deſigns and Inclinations of Mankind, and runs counter to their preſent Intereſts, and future Expectations, no wonder if it meets with a cold Reception, and is generally rejected or diſrelished by the

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Lukewarm and Worldly-minded. Theſe have always ſhewn a great Averſion to believe it. And ſuch is the ſtrange Perverſeneſs of Man's Will, that what God deſigns for his Benefit and Advantage, he generally turns to his own Prejudice and Ruin. Thus the Patience and Forbearance of God, the Delay of *Chriſt*'s Coming, and the deferring of the Day of Judgment, which are mercifully intended to move and incline Men to repent, and to give them Space and Opportunity for Repentance, they too often abuſe to the hardening themſelves in Impenitence and Unbelief. From a Senſe and Experience of his paſt Forbearance, they hope and expect, though they ſhould go on in their Sins, that he will indulge and forbear them ſtill. Whereas they ought to conclude with themſelves, that the longer he has exerciſed Patience towards them, the greater Cauſe they have to return, and the leſs Reaſon to preſume upon any farther Mercy. For the Divine Patience and Forbearance will not laſt for ever: Judgment will not always ſleep, nor the Power of God ſeem always to ſlumber: But the one will awake, when Men think of nothing leſs;

leſs; and the other be diſplay'd in the midſt of their Slumber and Security. The Anſwer which the Apoſtle gives to the ſcoffing Objectors in the Beginning of this Chapter is, that God is *long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance.* This is God's merciful Intention in all his Delays of Judgment: But if Men will not repent in the Time accepted, and in the Day of Salvation, when Mercy invites, and Patience waits for their Amendment, they can blame none but themſelves, if they are at laſt overtaken with the fiery Indignation, and periſh in the Day of Vengeance. We *know not what Hour our Lord will come*; but this we know, that if we are unprepared, when he does come, we are ruined and loſt for ever. Let us not then, from any pleaſing Poſture of Affairs at preſent, or any hopeful Proſpect for the future, promiſe ourſelves undiſturbed Reſt, and laſting Tranquillity. There is no Dependence upon a World, that is ſo full of Danger and Uncertainty. Changes and Viciſſitudes await us continually, at all Seaſons, and in all Places. Nature may ſuddenly take another Courſe, and the Face of Things

Things may ſoon alter, and certainly will, before the Coming of *Chriſt*. Mean-while, 'tis our Duty to be upon our Guard, and to be provided againſt any ſudden Surprize, *Looking for, and haſtening to, the Coming of the Day of God, wherein the Heavens, being on Fire, ſhall be diſſolved, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat.* To look for this great Revolution, is, you ſee, the Duty of every Chriſtian. But how can they look for that which they ſuppoſe to be at a great Diſtance off? And if we tell them otherwiſe, and endeavour to convince them of the contrary, we are generally eſteemed, for this, as Perſons addicted to Melancholy or Superſtition. But the Truth muſt be delivered, how few ſoever there are to believe it, or how great Oppoſition ſoever be made againſt it. We may ſee abundant Reaſon to be apprehenſive of the near Approach of *Chriſt*'s ſecond Advent, if we only compare the preſent Age with thoſe that are paſt; and eſpecially if we duly conſider the Signs of the Times, the Juſtice of God, and the Nature and Progreſs of Sin. But leaving theſe for the Subject of another Diſcourſe, I ſhall only deſire you to conſider,

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in the mean-while, the Reaſonableneſs and Neceſſity of *Watchfulneſs in general*. The Dangers we lie continually expoſed to, are ſo many and ſo great, and the Enemies of our Salvation ſo numerous and formidable, that ſurely 'tis but meet and right, that we ſhould be as vigilant and careful to *ſave* ourſelves, as they are to *deſtroy* us. When we are ſurprized, we blame ourſelves for not being more cautious; when we are guilty of an Error or Overſight, we repent of our Negligence or Raſhneſs. And is it not therefore much ſafer, as well as more prudent, to arm and guard againſt Trials and Tribulations, *before* they come, than to be ſeeking for the neceſſary Means to avoid or endure them, *when* they do come? Is it not better to be provided againſt diſtant or approaching Dangers *beforehand*, than *after* their Approach, to endeavour to ſecure or preſerve ourſelves; when ſuch After-care commonly proves *too late*, and is always attended with great *Difficulty* and *Hazard*? By a ſmall Neglect, or one Act of Heedleſſneſs, we may loſe more, in the Way of Piety and Virtue, than we ſhall be able to recover again, in a long Time, and with much

much Pains and Carefulneſs. We have a ſubtle Enemy to deal with, who watches all Opportunities to enſnare and undo us. What is *paſt*, he hides from us, as much as he can, that we may not repent of our Sins; what is *to come*, he endeavours to hinder us from thinking of, that we may be at laſt ſurprized and overtaken; and as to the Time *preſent*, he has a thouſand Ways and Stratagems to keep us from uſing and employing it as we ought. *Our* Buſineſs therefore is to conſider and countermine theſe Deſigns and Devices of Satan againſt our Souls; ſo to look *backward*, and conſider our paſt Life, that we may truly repent us of our Sins, and have our Accounts in Readineſs, when our Lord ſhall call us; ſo to look *forward* on the great Things of Futurity, that we may be prepared and thought worthy to eſcape the Evil, and to enjoy the Good; and ſo to improve every *preſent* Opportunity, as to be ſure that we are going forward, and not backward, in our Chriſtian Courſe, and advanced one Step nearer towards the *End of our Faith, even the Salvation of our Souls*, the Joys of Heaven and Immortality.

*Now*

*Now to God the* FATHER, *God the* SON, *and God the* HOLY GHOST, *be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, and Glory, Adoration, and Thankſgiving, now, and for evermore.* Amen.

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# SERMON III.

## The Burning of the World.

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2 PET. iii. 11, 12.

*Seeing then that all theſe Things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of Perſons ought ye to be in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs; looking for, and haſtening to, the Coming of the Day of God?*

THE Diſſolution of all Things, which the Apoſtle here aſſerts, he had before repreſented as including theſe Particulars, that *the Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great Noiſe, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat; the Earth alſo, and the Works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up.* So that as the Old World

periſhed by Water, ſo the Heavens and the Earth, that are now, are to be deſtroy'd by Fire; not the heavenly Bodies themſelves, or thoſe diſtant Luminaries, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, which will ſuffer only ſome external Change and Confuſion, but the lower Heavens, or the Region of the Air, with this terraqueous Globe, which are reſerved and deſtined to utter Deſtruction, to a total Conſumption or Diſſolution. Every Age, ſince the Flood, has been in Expectation of this awful Seaſon, and amazing Scene of Deſolation. Every Generation of Chriſtians, from the *firſt* Coming of *Chriſt*, have been, more or leſs, looking for his *ſecond*; and it would be ſtrange and ſurprizing indeed, if the *preſent* Age, which has more Reaſon than any former Age had, to look for ſuch Things, ſhould be ſo very different from all that have gone before, as to be wholly forgetful, or unconcerned about this great Event. To quicken our Faith, and awaken our Apprehenſions, in this reſpect, has been the Deſign of two former Diſcourſes on this Subject: In which I conſidered and explained the general Doctrine, and the great Duty reſulting from thence, *viz. Watchfulneſs in general.*

*general.* All that ſeems farther neceſſary, is to endeavour to ſtir you up to a ſerious *Expectation of*, and due *Preparation for*, our Lord's Second Coming, or the Diſſolution of all Things; and then to ſhew what more *particular* Duties ſuch Preparation does imply or require.

As to the former, we can't but expect and prepare, in ſome meaſure, for this great Change and Revolution, if we rightly conſider the Frame and Age of the World, the Signs of the Times, the Juſtice of God, and the Progreſs of Sin. Of each of theſe very briefly. *Firſt*, If we conſider the *Frame and Age of the World*, we ſhall ſee Reaſon enough to conclude, that it can't be of very long Continuance. God foreſeeing how much this World, and the Things of the World would be abuſed by his Creatures, formed and compoſed it of ſuch Materials, that it might be capable of being afterwards conſumed by Fire. As all material Compoſitions are ſubject to a Diſſolution, ſo ſeveral of the Materials of which this World is compoſed, are of a fiery Nature, or combuſtible Quality, and by a direct Act of Providence, lodged here and there, or at proper

Diſtances from one another, in order to communicate the Fire of the laſt Day to the Whole, and to every Part. There are at this Day ſome *Burning Mountains*, that have continued burning, more or leſs, for ſeveral Ages ſucceſſively. And their Fire, perhaps, will not be extinguiſhed, nor their Fewel exhauſted or conſumed, before the general Conflagration; for which they ſeem to be ordained by God, both as Means and Inſtruments in that Deſolation, and as rueful and laſting Memorials, to warn every Generation of Men of the final Diſſolution of all Things by Fire. At preſent their Force and Power is, for the moſt part, limited and reſtrained; but when 'tis inlarged, (as it will be at the laſt) they will then ſpread Deſolation far and near. Now from the ſingle Conſideration of theſe *Burning Mountains*, (to mention nothing farther) we have a great deal more Reaſon to wonder, that the World has not all this while been burnt up, than that it is to be conſumed by Fire at laſt. Nor can we aſcribe its Preſervation in this reſpect, to any leſs Cauſe, than the gracious and miraculous Interpoſition of Providence, limiting and controuling the

the Force of theſe ſubterraneous Fires, as he does the Current of the great Deep, and ſaying to one as well as the other, *Hitherto ſhall ye come, and no further*; till the Time I have appointed for the full Exertion of your native Strength. And to this St. *Peter* ſeems to refer, when he ſays, that *the Heavens and the Earth are kept in Store, and reſerved unto Fire, againſt the Day of Judgment.* By which he does not obſcurely intimate, that they are at preſent providentially preſerved from the Power of that Fire, which is always ready to ſeize and devour them; as the Waters ſoon overflowed the Earth, when God took off his reſtraining Hand from them. So that 'tis but for God to call forth, and let looſe, thoſe Powers of Fire, that are lodged in the Earth and the Air, and that now lie dormant; and the World would ſoon be all in Flames. Then as to the *Antiquity* of the World, tho' the World itſelf does not, like the Things upon it, decay with Age, and is not the *more periſhing* for being *older*, but continues ſtill in the ſame State and Situation, has the ſame lofty and laſting Mountains, the ſame wide and extended Ocean, and the ſame noted Rivers,

that it had in former Times, or ever ſince the Flood; yet God has determined the Number of its Days, beyond which it cannot paſs. There is a fixt Period in the ſecret Decrees of Heaven for the Time of its Diſſolution; ſo that the *older* it grows, the nearer it muſt be to its deſtined Fate. Upon which Account, *we* that live in the preſent Age, have more Reaſon than any of our *Forefathers* had, to be apprehenſive of its approaching Diſſolution. But how near, or how far off that is, is not directly or expreſly revealed. But ſome have inferred, from God's creating the World in ſix Days, and reſting on the ſeventh, and from St. *Peter*'s affirming in the Words before my Text, that *one Day is with the Lord as a thouſand Years, and a thouſand Years as one Day*, that the World will continue juſt ſix thouſand Years, and that the ſeventh will be the Sabbath, or that *Reſt which remaineth for the People of God.* What Truth there is in this Notion, or what Streſs we ought to lay upon it, I ſhall not now inquire. But ſuppoſe there were ſufficient Grounds for this Opinion; we ſhall ſtill be at a Loſs to find out the Age of the World. There is ſo much

Confuſion

Confuſion in the Account of Time, and ſo much Difference in the Calculation of Chronologers, that we can arrive at nothing of Certainty in this Point. And it ſeems to be purpoſely hid from our Eyes by God, that the Uncertainty of the End may keep us the more upon our Guard. All therefore that I would obſerve in this Caſe is, that the World is certainly very old. All agree in placing its Age between five and ſix thouſand Years, according to the *Hebrew* Computation, and moſt ſuppoſe it to be much nearer the latter than the former. And it may be a great deal nearer ſtill, than we imagine; and if ſo, then it muſt be *ſo much* nearer its End, whether it be to laſt only ſix thouſand Years, or longer.

*Secondly*, If to the natural State and Age of the World, we add the *Signs of the Times*, or the moral Evidences we have in this Caſe, we ſhall ſee farther Cauſe to apprehend, that the Diſſolution of all Things cannot be at any very great Diſtance off. A Man muſt have been a very careleſs Obſerver indeed of Things, Times, and Perſons, that has not obſerved the great and viſible Decay of Chriſtianity, both in Principle and Practice, for

ſome

ſome Years paſt; a Decay ſo general, ſo ſudden, and ſo unexpected, that 'tis not perhaps to be parallelled by any thing we meet with, within the Compaſs of the ſame Number of Years, from the Foundation of Chriſtianity, to the Commencement of this great Defection. Now *the Spirit ſpeaketh expreſly*, not only that *in the latter Days ſome ſhall depart from the Faith*, but that there ſhall come a *falling away*, or a more general Apoſtaſy; which, whenever it happens, is to be a Warning to us of the near Approach of *Chriſt*'s ſecond Advent. It was under the *moſt corrupt* State of the *Jewiſh* Church, that he made his *firſt* Appearance in the World; and it will be in the *moſt degenerate* State of Chriſtianity, that he will appear a *ſecond* Time in Glory. The abounding therefore of Iniquity, and the great Decay of Chriſtian Piety, Faith, and Charity, which are the more open Signs of theſe Times, ſhould be ſo far from inclining us to follow others in their Defection from the Faith, or in their Unconcernedneſs about Religion, that it ought on the contrary to awaken our Attention, to excite our Zeal, and to haſten our Preparations,

that

that ſo we may not at laſt be condemned with the World.

*Thirdly*, If to the Iniquity of the Times we join the Conſideration of God's *Juſtice*, we ſhall ſee another Reaſon for expecting the Revelation of *Chriſt* from Heaven. 'Tis a general and juſt Obſervation, that righteous and wicked Nations, or publick Communities, are capable of being rewarded and puniſhed, *as ſuch, only in this Life*. And if this be the Caſe with reſpect to the ſeveral Nations of the World, it muſt be true likewiſe in reference to the *World itſelf*; which is every Day growing more and more ripe for Judgment. And when the Meaſure of its Iniquity is filled up, then will God pour out the full Phials of his Wrath upon it, and conſume it by a fiery Deluge, and make it a rueful Monument of his juſt Vengeance and Indignation. For as God ſpared not the Old World, when the Wickedneſs of its Inhabitants was come to full Maturity, but deſtroy'd it by a Flood of Waters; ſo when the Iniquity of the World, that now is, ſhall be arrived at ſuch a Height and Degree of Provocation, as God has pre-ordained for its Extent and Fulneſs, he will then put an

End

End to that Frame and Scene of Things, which has miniſtred ſo much Matter and Occaſion for his Creatures to rebel and ſin againſt him. And this Reaſon will appear more evident and ſtrong, if we conſider,

*Fourthly*, The *Nature* and *Progreſs of Sin*, or that all Sin is naturally progreſſive, and muſt go on and increaſe, if not diverted from its Courſe by the Operations of Grace, or the Reſtraints of Providence. And this is true not only of perſonal and particular Sins, but of the Sins of the World in general; which, as the Scripture aſſures us, will, in the latter Days, grow worſe and worſe, and abound and overflow with Ungodlineſs. So it was immediately before the Flood. The World that then was, is ſtyled by St. *Peter*, *the World of the Ungodly*; and *Moſes* tells us, in his Hiſtory of thoſe Times, that *the whole Earth was filled with Violence*, and that *every Imagination of the Heart of Man was only evil continually*; which is an emphatical Deſcription of the deepeſt and moſt inveterate Guilt, when Men were totally and univerſally depraved, without any Degree or Mixture of Goodneſs. And this, according to the Nature and Progreſs of Sin, muſt be

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the Caſe of the preſent World at laſt, if ſuffered by God to continue ſo long, (though this is more than can be expected) unleſs there be a Repentance and Reformation, to ſtop its Courſe, ſomewhat proportioned to the Meaſure and Extent of its Guilt. And though this likewiſe be more than we can well hope for, yet who knows, but there may be a Reſerve of Mercy, a Reſerve of better Times? Who knows, but that God may ſtill *turn and repent, and leave a Bleſſing behind him?* If we hope for ſo great a Bleſſing, our own Endeavours muſt not be wanting. If we deſire not to ſee the *woful Day*, if we wiſh the Continuance of the preſent World, if we would not that the Evils foretold and threatened by God, ſhould come to paſs in our Days, but be ſuſpended and deferred to the next, or ſome future Generation, we muſt endeavour, all we can, to put ſome Stop to the preſent rapid Courſe, and furious Progreſs of Sin, by a ſerious Repentance and Amendment in ourſelves, and a ſincere Deſire and Care to promote a general Reformation; for the farthering of which, among ourſelves, I proceed,

In

In the *laſt* Place, to inquire what particular Duties the Doctrine I have been conſidering, does require of us, or oblige us to. *Seeing then that all theſe Things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of Perſons ought we to be in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs?* This Inference, or Exhortation, is delivered, you ſee, in the moſt general and comprehenſive Terms, and takes in all that is, or can be neceſſary to qualify and prepare us for meeting our Lord. But as there are ſome Duties *more peculiarly proper* and requiſite for this End, and mentioned and recommended *as ſuch* by the ſacred Writers themſelves, I ſhall take notice, at preſent, only of theſe, and that very briefly.

The firſt is that of St. *Paul*— *And they that uſe this World, as not abuſing it; for the Faſhion of this World paſſeth away.* The Apoſtle had ſaid juſt before, that *the Time is ſhort*; and he who looks upon the World as full of Vanity, and of ſhort Continuance, is not likely to *abuſe* it. Our only Danger is, when we promiſe ourſelves great Things from it, and hope for a long Enjoyment of it. Such Hopes and Deſires muſt neceſſarily abate our Affections to better Things, and take

take off our Hearts from heavenly Objects, and keep us in a State of Unpreparedneſs for our Lord's Coming.

Another Duty peculiarly proper for this Purpoſe, is that mentioned and recommended by St. *Peter*:---*The End of all Things is at hand; be ye therefore ſober, and watch unto Prayer.* ---Tho' *the End of all Things*, in this Place, is ſuppoſed by ſome to denote no more, than the End of the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation, or the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* by the *Romans*; yet the Argument comes to the ſame, and is at leaſt as forcible and ſtrong, as if the Apoſtle had really meant what is properly called the ſecond Advent of *Chriſt*. For if the Chriſtians of that Time were obliged to more than ordinary Care in the Duties of Watchfulneſs and Devotion, becauſe of the Judgments then coming upon the *Jews*; have not we of this Age abundantly more Reaſon to watch and to pray, leſt we be ſurprized and overtaken by the ſudden Coming of *Chriſt* to judge the World? Watching, Sobriety, and Praying, are the beſt Means to prevent any ſuch Surprize, and the great Uncertainty of his Coming ſhould be a powerful Motive to the Practice of theſe Duties. *Watch therefore*;

*for you know not what Hour your Lord doth come, leſt coming ſuddenly, he find you ſleeping.*

A third Duty reſulting from the Belief and Conſideration of the Diſſolution of all Things, is that urged by St. *Paul*—*Let your Moderation be known unto all Men; the Lord is at hand.*—A meek, quiet, and peaceable Deportment, muſt needs be highly becoming thoſe, who are *looking for, and haſtening to, the Coming of the Day of God.* A common Danger will ſometimes unite the moſt diſagreeing Parties, and diſtant Inclinations; and therefore, if we have any Apprehenſions of Danger, (and our Caſe muſt be the more dangerous, if we have not) and if we have any true Zeal and Concern for the ſpiritual Good of ourſelves and others, we ſhould ſhew it more particularly at ſuch Times, by mutual Counſel, Encouragement, and Exhortation, as the Apoſtle directs us in theſe Words; *Not forſaking the aſſembling yourſelves together, as the manner of ſome is; but exhorting one another, and ſo much the more, as you ſee the Day approaching.*

I ſhall mention but one Duty more to this Purpoſe; which is what St. *James* recommends to us in theſe Words — *Be patient therefore,*

*therefore, Brethren, unto the Coming of the Lord: Behold, the Husbandman waiteth for the precious Fruit of the Earth, and hath long Patience for it, until he receive the early and latter Rain. Be ye alſo patient, ſtabliſh your Hearts; for the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh.* Now *Patience* is a Virtue of that abſolute Neceſſity through every Stage of our Life, that without it we can neither hope to live comfortably here, or to obtain Happineſs hereafter. And nothing can more encourage our Patience, than the Proſpect of an approaching Recompence, which the patient and faithful Servants of *Chriſt* are ſure to receive at his ſecond Coming; and therefore are bid to *lift up their Heads with Joy*, when they perceive that their *Redemption draweth nigh.*

This is the great Spur and Incentive to all Duty and Obedience, which the Apoſtles frequently urged with mighty Efficacy and Succeſs, and which gave Force and Weight to all their Admonitions. The Chriſtians then, looking upon the Day of the Lord, *as approaching* or *near at hand*, were prepared againſt all Caſualties and Events, willing to attend and comply with any Counſels and In-

junctions that were thought ſeaſonable or proper for them, and firmly united in earneſt Endeavours after the *common Salvation*, labouring for others as well as for themſelves, that they might not be diſappointed of their Hope, or fall ſhort of that *Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, has promiſed to all them that love his Appearing.*

*Now to God the* FATHER, *God the* SON, *and God the* HOLY GHOST, *be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, now and for evermore.*

# SERMON IV.

## The Bleſſedneſs of them that die in the LORD.

# SERMON IV.

## The Bleſſedneſs of them that die in the LORD.

REV. xiv. 13.

*I heard a Voice from Heaven ſaying unto me, Write; Bleſſed are the Dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their Labours; and their Works do follow them.*

IF we conſider what remarkable Paſſages theſe Words are placed between, and with what Solemnity they are delivered and uſhered in, we may reaſonably conclude, that they have not yet received their intended Accompliſhment; but that they reſpect ſome

future Time, and ſome Perſons yet to come. I ſhall therefore,

*Firſt*, Conſider them as they relate to the Context, or according to their primary Intent and Meaning: And then,

*Secondly*, Endeavour to explain and enforce the comfortable Truths implied in them, for the Support and Encouragement of all true Believers. And,

*Firſt*, Let us conſider a little the immediate Occaſion and Deſign of this Paſſage; which contains Matters of the greateſt Importance, as is evident from the ſolemn Manner in which it is delivered, and from the expreſs Command, that it ſhould be carefully preſerved by Writing. *I heard a Voice from Heaven ſaying unto me, Write:* To which we have farther added the Teſtimony of the Holy Ghoſt; *Yea, ſaith the Spirit*, confirming what was delivered by the Voice from Heaven. But if that which was delivered related only to the Righteous departed, in general, there was no Occaſion for all this Solemnity to convince or aſſure St. *John* of ſo plain a Truth, which he had

had before (in Effect) often declared, and which is to be met with in almoſt every Page of the *New Teſtament*. Theſe ſolemn Forms of Speech are never uſed, in Scripture, on common Occaſions; but are ſuch Warnings and Preparations, as always ſhew the Matter delivered to be of the utmoſt Conſequence, or ſomewhat of an extraordinary Moment. And what is thus ſolemnly ordered to be written, is this;—— *Bleſſed are the Dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth, that they may reſt from their Labours; and their Works do follow them.*——*Bleſſed are the Dead which die in the Lord, from* HENCEFORTH; that is, from the Time here ſpoken of; which, according to the preceding Words, means the *Antichriſtian State*; and, as the following Words denote, the *general Judgment*. As to the firſt, a moſt dreadful Woe is denounced againſt every one that ſhall worſhip the Beaſt and his Image, and receive the Mark of his Name. Then it follows; *Here is the Patience of the Saints: Here are they that keep the Commandments of God, and the Faith of Jeſus.* Which Words plainly point at ſome very uncommon Trials, ſome more than ordinary Seaſon of Affliction;

ction; and ſuch indeed will the *Antichriſtian Perſecution* be, beyond all that has gone before, or that can well be imagined. Then come the Words of my Text, and immediately after them this remarkable Paſſage; ——*And I looked, and, behold, a white Cloud; and upon the Cloud one ſat like unto the Son of Man, having on his Head a golden Crown, and in his Hand a ſharp Sickle. And another Angel came out of the Temple, crying with a loud Voice to him that ſat on the Cloud; Thruſt in thy Sickle and reap: for the Time is come to reap; for the Harveſt of the Earth is ripe.* Which Paſſage has a plain reference to *Chriſt*'s ſecond Coming to Judgment, when the Iniquity of the World will be filled up, and ripe for Vengeance: So that, conſidering and comparing the Text and Context together, the Promiſe of Bleſſedneſs, here pronounced on thoſe that *die in the Lord*, more directly belongs to thoſe few good Chriſtians, in Compariſon, whoſe Lot it ſhall be to live under the *Antichriſtian Perſecution*; when the Miſeries of Mankind will be ſo great and univerſal, that *Life* will become a Burden, and *Death* the only Remedy they can hope for. For, in thoſe Days,

Days, there will be *ſuch Tribulation as never was ſince the Creation that God created*; ſuch indeed, that unleſs they were ſhortened, no Fleſh could be ſaved: Therefore is there a Voice from Heaven, and the Teſtimony of the Holy Ghoſt, to aſſure the Chriſtians of thoſe Days, that *Bleſſed are the Dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth.* Bleſſed are they, in a peculiar manner, becauſe they will thereby be delivered from the moſt direful Calamities, and their Eyes ſhall not ſee all the Evils that will then be brought upon the World. And farther; Bleſſed ſhall they be, that then *die in the Lord*; becauſe, not very long after Death, will follow *the firſt Reſurrection*, of which they have likewiſe Aſſurance to be made Partakers: So that, by their Death, they will not only be delivered from the *greateſt Miſeries*, but, in a ſhort time after, be inſtated in the Enjoyment of the *greateſt Happineſs*. This I take to be the plain and primary Senſe of the Words of the Text: But, to put the loweſt Conſtruction upon them that the Context will bear, they are evidently deſigned to encourage and fortify Chriſtians againſt ſome very violent Perſecutions

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in the latter Days; which St. *John* here deſcribes by very terrible Circumſtances: Inſomuch that he pronounces it a very great Happineſs to be taken out of the World before thoſe calamitous and trying Times ſhould come; which might endanger the Faith and Patience of the beſt Men. And now I come,

In the *ſecond Place*, To conſider and explain the Matters contained or implied in this Paſſage, for the Support and Conſolation of all true Believers.

*Bleſſed are the Dead which die in the Lord.* —To *die in the Lord*, is a Phraſe that is applied, by ſome, only to the Caſe of *Martyrs*: But I ſhall conſider it here, as 'tis now generally underſtood, of all thoſe that live and die in the true Faith and Fear of God. And the *Bleſſedneſs* of ſuch is here repreſented under two diſtinct Conſiderations;

1. That *they reſt from their Labours*. And,
2. That *their Works do follow them*.

1. *They reſt from their Labours*: Which Expreſſion will be beſt explained, or underſtood, by conſidering the Drift and Deſign of St. *Paul*'s Diſcourſe, in the fourth Chapter of his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*; where he treats

treats profeſſedly of this Subject, and ſeems to labour more than ordinarily to clear up the Point. The Concluſion he propoſed to prove and eſtabliſh, is this;——*There remaineth therefore a Reſt for the People of God.*—— This he deduces, and fully proves, from a ſingle Paſſage in the ninety-fifth *Pſalm*;—— *If they ſhall enter into my Reſt.*——Which Words, *my Reſt*, or God's *Reſt*, he ſhews, cannot properly be meant, or underſtood, of *that Reſt* which *Joſhua* gave the Children of *Iſrael* in the Land of *Canaan*, becauſe that was *already paſt*: Whereas God here ſpeaks of a Reſt *yet to come*, *ſaying*, *in* David, *To-day*, *after ſo long a Time*, that is, from the Time of the *Iſraelites* entering into the Reſt of *Canaan*. For if *Joſhua* had given them the *Reſt* here ſpoken of, *then would not* God afterwards *have ſpoken*, by the Pſalmiſt, *of another* Day of *Reſt*. And farther the Apoſtle ſhews, that the *Reſt* mentioned by *David*, is not the ſame which God is ſaid to have enter'd into, after he had finiſhed the Works of Creation; becauſe *this*, as well as the Reſt of *Canaan*, was *paſt* and *gone*: Whereas the Reſt, promiſed by the *Pſalmiſt*, is to be enjoy'd *hereafter*. But though theſe

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two Reſts are thus different and diſtinct, namely, that ſpoken of by *David*, and that of the ſeventh Day; yet the Apoſtle intimates, that there is one plain and near Reſemblance between them; and that is, a total Ceſſation from all Work. For ſo he expreſly affirms, of every true Chriſtian or Believer, after he is departed out of this World, and is enter'd into his Reſt, That *he alſo hath ceaſed from his own Works, as God did from his.* And this is another Argument which the Apoſtle, by the way, makes uſe of to prove, that the *Reſt* mentioned by *David*, cannot denote the Reſt which *Joſhua* gave the Children of *Iſrael* in *Canaan*; becauſe though that might, in ſome ſenſe, be called a *Reſt*, yet it was not free, or exempt from *Toil* and *Labour*. And, for the ſame Reaſon, we may as truly affirm, that the Reſt promiſed by the *Pſalmiſt*, and which *remaineth to the People of God*, is no Part or Property of the Life that now is; ſuch a perfect Reſt from all Work and Labour being not now attainable on this ſide the Grave. For though Men may outlive all their active Powers, and become utterly incapable of working any longer; yet, while they

they are in the Fleſh, they will be ſubject to Pains, Diſeaſes, and all kinds of bodily Sufferings, which are the Workings of Nature, and the Effects of the Curſe, and which will as much, if not more than any other Works, hinder the Soul from the Enjoyment of Reſt. Since therefore this perfect Reſt from all Labour is not to be obtained or hoped for in this Life, we are left to ſeek it in the next; but in what Part of the next, may be matter of ſome Inquiry. For there are three different States that await the Righteous in the other World, *viz.* the *middle*, the *millennial*, and the *heavenly* State. The Firſt takes place between Death and the Reſurrection; the Second in the *New Jeruſalem*, and after the firſt Reſurrection; and the Third at their Admiſſion into Heaven. Now the *Reſt* mention'd by St. *John* in my Text, and by St. *Paul* and holy *David* in the Paſſage before explain'd, may have ſome reference to all theſe future States; but to *which* of them more diſtinctly, will beſt appear by taking a ſhort View of all Three.

*Firſt*, As to the *middle* State, both Reaſon and Revelation informs us, that this Life

Life is the only Time for Action, that there is no Work or Device in the Grave whither we are going, and that Death is the Concluſion of our Race, and the Finiſhing of our Courſe; after which commences a new Scene of Things, very different from all that went before: For upon the Diſſolution of the Body, and Separation of the Soul, there follows, of Neceſſity *a Ceſſation from Work.* But then, this Ceſſation does not imply any *Sleepineſs* or *Inſenſibility* in the Soul, or that the rational Powers have there no Exerciſe or Employment: No, 'tis an Entrance into *Reſt* indeed, but from Works of the *Body*, not of the *Mind.* The original and moſt perfect Pattern of this Reſt in the middle State, is, That of the firſt ſeventh Day after the Creation, wherein *God reſted from all his Works.* But notwithſtanding this, our Saviour told the *Jews*, *my Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* Tho' the Works of Creation *were finiſhed from the Foundation of the World*; yet the Works of Providence, and the Work of Redemption, are ſtill continually carrying on. And this is ſomething of the Caſe of the Righteous in the middle State. They

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are enter'd into their *Reſt*, but not into an *idle* Reſt; they have ceas'd from their firſt Works, as God did from his. *They are entered into Peace*, as the Prophet ſpeaks, *they reſt in their Beds, each one walking in his Uprightneſs.* Their whole State, from the Hour of Death to the Day of their Reſurrection, is one continued *Sabbath*, or holy Reſt unto the Lord. And as the Day of God's reſting from his Work was afterwards ſolemnly ſet apart, and devoted to his Honour and Service, that ſo Men, being freed from bodily Cares, and worldly Buſineſs, might be more at Liberty to attend upon the Lord without Diſtraction, and to mind the one Thing needful, the great Concern of their Souls: So this Day, thus religiouſly kept and obſerv'd by the *Jews*, was a very proper Type and Figure (if not really ſo deſign'd) of *that Reſt*, which the Souls of the Righteous enjoy in *Abraham*'s *Boſom*, or the inviſible State; where being diſcharg'd not only from the Incumbrances of this World, but even from the Body itſelf, they are at Leiſure to contemplate the Truth and Eſſences of Things, with the full Strength

and Vigour of all their Faculties; where they look *back* with Pleaſure and Satisfaction, upon all their paſt Toils and Labours, upon the Troubles they have endured, the Dangers they have eſcaped, and the many intricate and amazing Scenes of Providence, which they have ſafely been conducted and carried thro', till they came to the Place that was appointed for them, a Place of ſecure Reſt, and ſweet Repoſe. Where likewiſe they look *forward*, with a longing Hope and Expectation, to thoſe great and glorious Things that are ſpoken of the City of God, that are prepared for them that love him, and that wait for the Coming of their Lord from Heaven. For this they are fully aſſured of, that *the Lord himſelf ſhall deſcend from Heaven, with the Voice of the Arch-Angel, and with the Trump of God, and the Dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt.* And then ſhall theſe righteous Souls, with their new glorified Bodies, take Poſſeſſion of the *New Jeruſalem* prepared for them, and be admitted to the Privilege and Bleſſings of the *millennial* State; which is,

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The *ſecond* State of Reſt, that awaits the Righteous in the World to come. That this preſent Earth, and all that is therein, ſhall be burnt up, and be ſucceeded by *a new Heaven and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteouſneſs*; that this Renovation of the World ſhall commence juſt before, or about the Time of the firſt Reſurrection, and that this bleſſed State ſhall laſt a *thouſand Years*, is very clearly and expreſly reveal'd in Holy Scripture: And the Deſcription there given of this State, plainly ſhews, that 'tis a State of *Reſt*; of ſuch a Reſt, I mean, as *Adam* enjoy'd *in Paradiſe*, while he continued in a State of Innocence; which conſiſted in a perfect Freedom, not from all Exerciſe and Employment, but from every Thing that is grievous, uneaſy, and troubleſome. Now this Reſt will be ſo far different from that of the middle State, as that the *Body* will be made Partaker of it as well as the *Soul*: And St. *Paul* tells us, that the Bodies of the Saints will be changed and glorified at the Reſurrection, and become vigorous, ſpiritual, and immortal, no longer ſubject to Infirmity or Decay, and every way qualified and adapted to the Services and Capacities of rational and

religious Souls. To which I may add, that there will then be no Enemies to diſquiet or moleſt the Inhabitants of the *New Jeruſalem*, and that the Curſe pronounced upon *Adam*, *In the Sweat of thy Face ſhalt thou eat Bread*, ſhall then be wholly removed; and that to this State belongs that peculiar Promiſe, (as may be ſeen by comparing the Context) *And God ſhall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes; and there ſhall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither ſhall there be any more Pain; for the former things are paſſed away.* Upon all which Accounts, we can't but obſerve, that the *Millennium* will be a State of perfect Peace, Reſt, and Tranquillity, free from all Annoyances and Diſturbances, from all Toil, Pain, and Grief, devoted to religious Services and Employments, and the Contemplation of a Triune God, and the adorable Perfections of the Supreme Being. And as the *Jewiſh* Sabbath was a proper Type, and ſuitable Repreſentation, of *the Reſt* which the Righteous departed enjoy in the *middle* State; ſo the *Chriſtian* Sabbath is as ſtrong and lively a Figure of that *holy Reſt*, and religious Employment, that is to make up the far greateſt

Part

Part of the Happineſs of the *millennial* State. And 'tis remarkable, that as the Obſervation of the *Chriſtian* Sabbath, or *Lord's-Day*, commenced from our Lord's riſing from the Dead on that Day, being the Firſt-fruits of them that ſleep; ſo the *Millennium* will commence at or near the Time of the Reſurrection of the Juſt, call'd by St. *Paul*, *the firſt Reſurrection*. And from hence I can't but infer, that tho' other Duties and Qualifications are alſo requiſite, yet that none is more neceſſary, more proper, or more likely, to fit and prepare us for enjoying the Happineſs both of the *middle* and *millennial* State, than a ſtrict and religious Obſervation of the *Lord's Day*.

*Laſtly*, As to the *heavenly* State, I need only obſerve, that as this is the higheſt Degree of Happineſs that our Nature is capable of enjoying, the moſt perfect Conſummation and Bliſs both in Body and Soul; ſo one principal Ingredient in this Supreme Felicity, is the Enjoyment of an undiſturbed Peace, a ſettled Reſt, and never-ceaſing Tranquillity. The Land of *Canaan* has been generally accounted a Type of the *heavenly* State; but ſurely it could be ſo, only *after* the Inhabitants of it were ſubdued, and the *Iſraelites*

ſettled in ſure and quiet Reſting-places to enjoy the Fruits of their Toil and Victories. Then indeed, as it was a Land of Fruitfulneſs, a Land of Triumph, and a Land of Peace, (and the free Promiſe and Gift of God) it became a proper Type and Emblem of thoſe calm Regions, and bleſſed Manſions above, which our bleſſed Saviour, by his glorious Victory over Death and Hell, has procured, and is gone to prepare for all his faithful Followers.

Having thus explain'd the firſt Part of that *Bleſſedneſs* which is promiſed to thoſe that *die in the Lord*, namely, that *they reſt from their Labours*, I ſhall ſpeak but a few Words to the other Part, *And their Works do follow them*. Theſe Works are the Works of Obedience, Reſignation, and Piety, towards God; of Juſtice, Mercy, and Beneficence, towards our Neighbour; and of Repentance, Humility, and Self-denial, with reſpect to Ourſelves. The good Deeds which ſincere Chriſtians have done in their Life-time, will be remember'd by God to their unſpeakable Advantage at the great Day of Accounts. In the mean while the Virtues and virtuous Diſpoſitions they have acquired, while in the

the Body, will accompany them into the other World, and make a great Part of their Happineſs there, and receive a farther Increaſe and Improvement, and a Recompence ſuitable to their preſent State. For there *the Weary be at Reſt*; there the *Mourners* are *comforted*; there the *Pious* are entertain'd with the moſt rapturous Contemplations; there the *Peaceable* are refreſh'd in the Abundance of Peace; there the *Merciful* are tranſported with the livelieſt Senſe and Experience of the Divine Mercy; there the *Humble* are highly exalted; there the *Meek* inherit Glory: And every one enjoys and lives upon the Fruits of his own Doings, the Remembrance of which is ever preſent with them, ever pleaſing, and ever refreſhing. *A good Man*, ſays *Solomon*, *is ſatisfied from himſelf*: He is ſatisfied from himſelf in *this Life*; and how great then muſt be his Satisfaction *in the next*, where there will be nothing to intercept the chearing Light of God's Countenance, and the inexpreſſible Comforts of a Mind at Peace with itſelf? How great is the Support of a filial Fear and Truſt in God, even here, under the Frowns and Storms of this World? But what is this to

the being placed under the direct Beams and Influence of the Sovereign Good, and *Sun of Righteouſneſs?* What is this to the Pleaſure and Satisfaction of having weather'd theſe Storms, and being got beyond the Reach of Danger or Fear, and being ſafely arrived at the *Land of Reſt*, at thoſe bliſsful and peaceful Habitations that are prepared for righteous Souls departed?

Wherefore, to conclude, Let us remember *who* it is that has call'd us, and *what* he has call'd us to; and then we ſhall not be wanting in our Duty and Service to ſo kind a Maſter, and ſo bountiful a Benefactor. Let us remember the *Wages* we are to receive, and we ſhall not neglect the *Work* we are to perform. Let us *remember the End, and we ſhall never do amiſs.* Only let us remember withal, that the Work which God has given us to do, muſt be finiſh'd in this Life; that, when we come to the next, we may have nothing to do there, but to reap and enjoy the Fruit of our Labour, and ſing Praiſes to the Author of our Being and Happineſs, and to the Honour of his holy Name.

*To Him therefore,* FATHER, SON, *and* HOLY GHOST, *Three Perſons and One* GOD, *be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Glory, and Thankſgiving, now and for evermore.* Amen.

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# SERMON V.

## Perfect Happineſs not to be expected, till the Number of GOD's Elect be accompliſhed.

# SERMON V.

## Perfect Happineſs not to be expected, till the Number of GOD's Elect be accompliſhed.

HEB. xi. 39, 40.

*Theſe all having obtained a good Report through Faith, received not the Promiſe: God having provided ſome better thing for us; that they, without us, ſhould not be made perfect.*

THE Proneneſs of Mankind to truſt in their own Righteouſneſs, and to imagine they have ſomething meritorious in themſelves, for thoſe little Services they are enabled to perform; and their eager Impatience to receive the promiſed Recompence, when their Service is ended;

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is ſo great and general, that God has thought fit to check and reſtrain theſe ſanguine Hopes, and forward Expectations, by deferring the Donation of a full Reward till ſome conſiderable Time after their Work is done. Were Chriſtians, upon their Departure out of this World, to be admitted directly into the higheſt Heavens, into the Preſence and Palace of the great King, to the *beatific Viſion of God*, as, on one hand, they would be too apt to flatter themſelves, that this State of Glory was, in ſome meaſure, due to their Deſerts; ſo, on the other, they would find that Scene of Glory would be too dazzling-bright, for thoſe who are juſt eſcaped from a State of Corruption and Mortality. Alas! there are many Stages and Degrees of Purification that the Soul muſt paſs thro', before it can arrive at its full Perfection, and be qualified to *behold the Face of God*. Tho' St. *Paul* promiſed himſelf *a Crown of Righteouſneſs* upon finiſhing his Courſe; yet he did not preſume to expect it *immediately after* he had finiſh'd; but only ſays, that *henceforth* there was laid up for him ſuch a Crown, and that this would be given or confer'd upon him *at that Day*, the Day of our Lord's Appear-

Appearing. After we have finiſh'd our Work, there muſt be a Time for *Reſt*; and when this Seaſon of Reſt is ended, then is the Time of *Enjoyment*. Therefore, as the ſame Apoſtle declares elſewhere, *we have need of Patience, that after we have done the Will of God, we may inherit the Promiſe.* When our Work is done, there will ſtill be Occaſion for the Exerciſe of Patience, in waiting for the promiſed Reward; which Reward is not to be beſtow'd, till the whole Number of God's Elect be fully completed, as is plainly and fully aſſerted in the Words of my Text; where the Apoſtle expreſly affirms of the antient Fathers, whoſe exemplary Faith he had been recommending to our Imitation, that *all theſe having obtained a good Report through Faith, received not the Promiſe: God having provided ſome better thing for us; that they, without us, ſhould not be made perfect*; i. e. Tho' the Saints and Servants of God live in different Ages, and depart out of this World at different Times, they ſhall not be rewarded accordingly, or in a diſtinct and ſeparate manner, but receive the promiſed Reward all together, at one and the ſame Time. So that *we* without *them*, and

and *they* without *us*, ſhall not be made *perfect*. However, as the contrary Doctrine, *viz.* that the Righteous departing this Life are immediately receiv'd up into Heaven, was the general Opinion or Perſuaſion of the laſt Age, and is ſtill too common and prevailing a Notion, I ſhall (1.) endeavour to prove from theſe Words, and ſome parallel Places of Scripture, that none of the Righteous have yet received the promiſed Reward, but are only enter'd into a State of Reſt, and partake of ſome lower Degrees of Happineſs, till the Time of Reſtitution and Conſummation of all Things be fully come. And (2.) that when God has finiſh'd his Work, and completed the Number of his Saints, he will then beſtow upon them jointly and fully, the promiſed Inheritance, and the glorious Reward.

As to the *Firſt* of theſe Heads, the Apoſtle's Words in the Text are very expreſs and particular, that tho' the Elders *obtained a good Report through Faith*, yet they *received not*, or have not receiv'd, *the Promiſe*. The Promiſe he refers to, is that which God made unto *Abraham*, and to his faithful Poſterity, *the Heirs with him of the ſame Promiſe*, which he

he clearly and fully explains in the ſeventeenth Verſe of this Chapter, and the two following; *Theſe all died in Faith, not having received the Promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off, and were perſuaded of them, and embraced them, and confeſſed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth*; and therefore could have no Hope of enjoying what God promiſed them, in the Place where they were, or while they were living; and therefore did not deſire a Return into their own Country, *for which*, ſays the Apoſtle, *they might have had an Opportnnity. But now they deſire a better Country*, that is, *an Heavenly: Wherefore God is not aſhamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a City, a City which hath Foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God.* If then theſe renown'd Patriarchs, theſe Fathers of the Faithful, theſe firſt Heirs of the Promiſes, and to whom the Promiſes were directly made, have not yet been admitted to the Enjoyment of them, and can't be made *perfect without us*, or till *our* Redemption be completed as well as *theirs*; we may be fully aſſured, that no other righteous Souls departed have been allowed to partake of

that bleſſed Inheritance. 'Tis plain then, that the Promiſe in the Text has no reſpect to any preſent State of Things, but is to receive its Completion at the End of the World. In the mean while, *the Souls of the Righteous are in the Hands of God, and there ſhall no Torment touch them.* They are lodg'd in *Paradiſe*, and in *Abraham's Boſom*, as our Saviour aſſures us; *they are entered into their Chambers, they reſt in their Beds, each one walking in his Uprightneſs*, according to the Prophet's Expreſſion; *they reſt from their Labours, and their Works do follow them*, as St. *John* declares. That is, they live upon the Fruits of their paſt Labours, enjoy the pleaſing Remembrance of having been uſeful in their Generation, and rejoice in the comfortable Proſpect, of having their Lot and Portion in the *Reſurrection of the Juſt.* But there are no Intimations in the Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament, much leſs any direct Teſtimonies, or expreſs Aſſertions, that thoſe who have died in Faith, have been bleſſed with the immediate Preſence and Fruition of God. On the contrary, all the ſacred Writings that ſpeak any thing of this matter, look directly the other way, and

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point at a different Seaſon of Retribution or Reward. The laſt Day, the Day of the Reſurrection, and final Judgment, and the Day of *Chriſt*'s ſecond Coming, appears all along in Scripture, to be *the Time* allotted and predetermined by God, for crowning the Righteous with Glory and Immortality. 'Tis generally allow'd now, that the Soul of our Bleſſed Lord himſelf did not go into Heaven before his Reſurrection, or while his Body lay in the Grave. 'Tis expreſly affirm'd, that *David* is not yet aſcended into the Heavens. 'Tis agreed on all hands, that the final irreverſible Sentence to be paſs'd upon all Men, will not be till the End of the World. 'Tis granted likewiſe, that Man can't receive his perfect Conſummation and complete Reward, ſo long as one Part of him is divided and diſunited from the other. And this is a Conceſſion of very weighty Conſideration, and ſuch as may be found ſufficient to determine this Point, were there no expreſs Teſtimonies of Scripture to decide the Matter. For while the Body is corrupting in the Grave, or mouldring into Duſt, or reduced to Aſhes, 'tis rightly ſuppoſed, that the Man is doing ſome ſort of *Penance*, and

is ſtill, in ſome Senſe, *in a State of Suffering*, which muſt be inconſiſtent with *a State of Glory*. The Ruins and Diſhonours of the Grave, are plain Marks, if not of a Divine Diſpleaſure, yet at leaſt of the Want of a perfect Reſtoration to the Divine Favour and Goodneſs: And 'tis abſurd to imagine, that the Soul is enjoying the higheſt Honour and Felicity, whilſt the Body is under Diſſolution and Diſgrace. And this Reaſon may be farther ſtrengthen'd by conſidering, that nothing *imperfect* can hope for an Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, which is a State of the utmoſt *Perfection* as well as Purity, and will admit of nothing that is partial, unſound, or defective. *When that which is perfect is come*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *then that which is imperfect ſhall be done away*. But Man muſt be allow'd to be in a State of Imperfection, while one conſtituent Part of him is ſtill wanting. God would not accept of a Sacrifice under the Law, that was not whole and entire, or that was any way blemiſh'd or defective. If a Perſon or Family were not able to provide a *whole* Lamb, they were not however to offer him *half*; but to provide ſomething of leſs Value, that was

entire, as Doves or Pigeons. And can we ſuppoſe, that any thing will be ſuffer'd to enter into the *Holieſt of all*, even into *Heaven itſelf*, but what is *perfect and entire, wanting nothing?* We may obſerve, that in the ſix Days Work of Creation, when God review'd any of the Works of his own Hands, and found it perfect in its kind, he ſtamp'd upon it this Mark of his Approbation, *And God ſaw that it was good:* But when any thing was left unfiniſh'd or incomplete for the preſent, this Approbation is not given. Thus, when he made the Firmament, and *divided the Waters which were under the Firmament, from the Waters which were above the Firmament*, it is only ſaid, *And it was ſo*, without any mention of that other Mark, *And God ſaw that it was good*; becauſe the Firmament was not yet fully complete, beautified, and adorn'd, as it was afterwards, when God ſet in it *two great Lights to give Light upon the Earth*, and *made the Stars alſo*. Thus Man likewiſe is imperfect and incomplete, while one original Half of him is abſent, and not reſtored. And 'tis very remarkable, that in the State of Death the Image of God, in which he was created, is ſuppoſed

to be loſt, or at leaſt greatly defaced; as is ſtrongly implied in that Paſſage, *Whoſo ſheddeth Man's Blood, by Man ſhall his Blood be ſhed*; FOR *in the Image of God made he Man.* Which Reaſon would be of no Force, if the Image of God were not deſtroy'd, or defaced by the Death and Diſſolution of the Body. If Death then deſtroys or defaces the Image of God in Man, can we imagine, that he is in a fit or proper Condition to appear before God, while this Image is wanting in him? Now this infers the *Neceſſity* of a Reſurrection, when this Image will be perfectly reſtored. And therefore the Children of the Reſurrection, are ſaid by our Saviour to be *equal unto the Angels.* They ſeem to be *more equal* or more like to them, as to their *Natures*, while they continue ſeparate or *unbodied* Spirits; their Equality to them therefore after the Reſurrection, muſt conſiſt in being made as *perfect* in *their* Kind, as the *Angels* are in *theirs*, and veſted with the ſame Privilege of Immortality. 'Tis the *Reſurrection* that will make them thus equal; they are not ſo till then. But how can all this be, if Man be as perfect and as happy *before*, as he will be *after* the Reſurrection? If he is

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to receive no Advantages from the Reſurrection of the Body, (And what Advantages can he be ſuppos'd to receive thereby, if he be admitted beforehand into the higheſt Heaven, among the Choir of Angels, to ſtand with them before the Throne of God?) he may be equal to the Angels *without* it, contrary to what our Saviour plainly intimates; and bear ſtill the *full Image* of God, contrary to an expreſs divine Intimation. But if he ſhall receive Advantages, and conſiderable Advantages too, by the Reſurrection of the Body, he will then receive an Addition of Happineſs; conſequently his Happineſs was imperfect before, and no imperfect Happineſs dwells in Heaven. Or could we ſuppoſe, that the Soul while abſent from the Body, can be either *fully tormented* or *fully glorified*, we ſhould then be induced to conclude from hence, that either the Soul is not Partaker of the Sins of the Body, or the Body not Partaker of the Holineſs of the Soul; which would exempt the one from *Puniſhment*, the other from *Reward*; that is, the *Bodies* of the Wicked and the Righteous from any future Retribution.

From what has been ſaid, it does, I hope, ſufficiently appear, that there is no final Sentence, no deciſive Judgment, no complete Redemption, no perfect Glorification, no full Reward, to be expected *before Chriſt*'s ſecond Coming to judge the World. But *when He, the chief Shepherd, ſhall appear, then*, as St. *Peter* ſays, *ſhall ye receive a Crown of Glory, that fadeth not away.* And our Saviour himſelf, juſt before his Departure out of the World, comforted his Diſciples with this Promiſe: *In my Father's Houſe are many Manſions: if it were not ſo, I would have told you. I go to prepare a Place for you; and if I go, and prepare a Place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myſelf, that where I am, there ye may be alſo.* So that they were not to be *where he was*, before his ſecond Coming. In the mean while, he aſſures them, that he would provide proper Manſions for them in his Father's Houſe; but then they were not to inhabit, or take Poſſeſſion of theſe Manſions, before his Coming again; and then he would receive them unto himſelf, and not them only, but all thoſe alſo that love his Appearing. For,

*Secondly*,

*Secondly*, When God has finiſhed his Work, and completed the Number of his Saints, he will then beſtow upon them jointly, or all together, the promiſed Inheritance, and the glorious Reward.

The Truth and Certainty of this Propoſition has been partly conſidered under the foregoing Head; but the Reaſon of God's Purpoſe and Diſpenſation in this Caſe, is a diſtinct Conſideration, and what I ſhall now briefly explain. Now this Reaſon is implied in theſe Words of St. *Paul*;—*God having provided ſome better thing for us, that they, without us, ſhould not be made perfect.* The Perfection which God here requires and aims at, is not of any *Part*, though never ſo conſiderable, but of the *Whole*. All the Saints, now in Paradiſe, are but a *Part* of *Chriſt's myſtical Body*: The full Complement will not be, till God has accompliſhed the Number of his Elect; then, and not before, will there be properly a *Church Triumphant*; when both the Head, and all its conſtituent Members, are fitly framed and compacted together in one Place. *Chriſt*, the Head of this Body, is now in Heaven; and has there taken Poſſeſſion of the heaven-

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ly Manſions, prepared for his ſeveral Members. But if ſome of theſe Members were admitted into Heaven *before* and *without* the reſt; if, while ſome were glorified, others were partly in a State of Diſcipline or Diſhonour; if, while ſome were united to the Head, others were ſtill wanting; the Body of *Chriſt*, in Heaven, would appear deformed and defective, and far from that *glorious Church*, which he deigns to *preſent* and unite *to himſelf, not having Spot or Wrinkle, or any ſuch thing*; but ſuch as *is holy, and without Blemiſh*. The Apoſtle tells us, That God hath *given him to be Head over all things to his Church, which is his Body, the Fulneſs of him that filleth all in all*. If then the Church be both the *Body* and the *Fulneſs* of *Chriſt*, he cannot have a *complete* Body, and muſt want *ſome Part* of his Fulneſs, if *any* of his Members be *ſeparate* or *abſent* from him. 'Tis therefore moſt congruous to Reaſon, and moſt agreeable to Scripture, to believe, and conclude, that *all* the faithful Servants of God, all that have died in the Faith, both before and under the Law, and under the Goſpel, will be received into Glory, and take Poſſeſſion of the Kingdom of Heaven,

ven, at one and the ſame time; that is, when the Myſtery of God is finiſhed, and the Redemption of Mankind is completed by the Reſurrection of the Dead. *Before this Time*, neither Patriarchs, nor Prophets, nor Apoſtles, will receive their Crown of Righteouſneſs, or be fully glorified. Neither we without them, nor they without us, can be made perfect. All Enemies muſt be ſubdued, and even *Death*, the laſt Enemy, be deſtroyed, before our victorious Redeemer will lead his Ranſom'd in Triumph, and conduct them into his Father's Kingdom, and *preſent them faultleſs before the Throne of his Glory*. If any Saints can be ſuppoſed capable, before this, of obtaining Admiſſion into the higheſt Heavens; it muſt be thoſe that have ſuffered Martyrdom, and laid down their Lives *for the Teſtimony of Jeſus*. Yet even theſe, according to the Viſion vouchſafed to St. *John*, are to wait till this Fulneſs of Time be come: For ſo it is repreſented to him, in the ſixth Chapter of the *Revelation*—*I ſaw, under the Altar, the Souls of them that were ſlain for the Word of God, and for the Teſtimony which they held. And they cried with a loud Voice, ſaying, How long,*

*long, O Lord, holy and true! doſt thou not judge and avenge our Blood on them that dwell on the Earth? And white Robes were given to every one of them: And it was ſaid unto them, that they ſhould reſt yet for a little Seaſon, until their Fellow-ſervants alſo, and their Brethren, that ſhould be killed, as they were, ſhould be fulfilled.* The Place where St. *John* ſaw theſe holy Souls in, even *under* the Altar, ſhews that they were not then in the higheſt Heaven: Their Prayer for Vengeance upon their Enemies, ſeems not well conſiſtent with their being in a State of Glory; and their being order'd to *reſt yet for a little Seaſon*, till the Number of Martyrs was filled up, is a plain and ſufficient Indication, that the Acceſſion of their Fellow-ſufferers was neceſſary to complete their own Happineſs and Perfection. And if neither Martyrs nor Confeſſors, neither Prophets, nor Apoſtles, will be completely happy, or receive their full Reward, before they are redeemed from Death, and delivered from the Power of the Grave; we may be ſure that no other Saints departed will be admitted to this high Privilege and Favour before that Time appointed of God.

Having

Having thus conſidered and explained the two doctrinal Points implied in the Text; I ſhall now make one or two Inferences and Obſervations, from what has been ſaid, and conclude.

*Firſt*, We may learn from hence, to admire and adore the infinite Wiſdom, Juſtice, and Goodneſs of God, in ordering and diſpoſing, in conducting and carrying on, the great Affair of our Salvation, in ſo wonderful a manner; and bringing it, at laſt, to a glorious and final Iſſue. All God's Works, indeed, are full of Wonder, and ordered and diſpoſed by him, *in Number, Weight, and Meaſure*. All the Diſpenſations of Grace are deſigned to prepare us for Glory. All the Severities of this Life, and all the Ruins and Deſolations of the Grave, are intended to diſplay before our Eyes, the deſtructive Nature and Odiouſneſs of Sin, and the rigorous Demands of Divine Juſtice. The greateſt Sanctity of the Holieſt of the Sons of Men, cannot prevail with God ſo to alter, or break in upon his own Method, as to reſcue any one of them from the Power of Death, or to receive him up into Glory *before* the appointed Time; but *Abel*, the *firſt* Saint that entered

*Para-*

*Paradiſe*, muſt wait the Coming of the *laſt* Saint upon Earth, before he can enter into the *higheſt Heaven*. God is no Reſpecter of Perſons; and that he may ſhew himſelf partial to none, he has decreed and determined, that the Inheritance he has ſo freely promiſed, and his Son ſo dearly purchaſed, for the Children of Men, ſhall be conferred and beſtowed upon them all together, at the End of the World; even as the Children of *Iſrael* marched, *in a Body*, to take Poſſeſſion of the *earthly Canaan* (a Type of the *heavenly*) after their forty Years ſojourning in the Wilderneſs, pre-ordained by God, was fully expired. *Egypt*, where they were in Bondage before, is a Type of this World; where the Servants of God muſt expect to endure great Hardſhips: The *Wilderneſs* is a Figure of the inviſible State, ſequeſtered from all Commerce with the World; where the Souls of the Righteous are fed and ſuſtained with ſpiritual Manna, till they arrive at the heavenly *Canaan*. And thus the faithful Servants of God are to paſs through this troubleſome World; where their Sins are to be ſubdued, and their Natures ſanctified; after which, they muſt, for a longer or ſhorter

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Space of Time, lay down their Bodies in the Grave, while their Souls are tranſlated to the Region of Spirits; there to continue in a joyful Expectation of a bleſſed Immortality, till the laſt Trumpet ſhall call them out of their Graves, and ſummon them to appear before the Judgment-ſeat of *Chriſt*; there to receive their final Abſolution; and then, together with all the Saints, enter, with Triumph, into the Kingdom of Heaven. Such is the Order and Method of the Divine Counſel and Procedure, in the ſeveral Stages and Degrees of our Redemption.

*Secondly*, The preceding Doctrine may ſerve to give us an awful Senſe and Apprehenſion of the infinite Purity and Holineſs of God; who will not receive us into his *immediate* Preſence, though purified by Faith, and waſhed from our Sins in the Blood of the Lamb, till we have received our *perfect Conſummation in Body and Soul.* None but the holy Angels, who never ſinned, and the Son of Man, who is Innocence itſelf, can approach the Throne of Glory, until He, the great Shepherd, appears to introduce his Followers into the Court of Heaven. Now God, by keeping Men at this Diſtance from him, and

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that for ſo long a Time, and not permitting, as yet, any direct Acceſs to him, ſignifies and declares the Greatneſs and Awfulneſs of his Majeſty; which is *too ſacred, too ſublime*, to be approached unto, until the Day of final Redemption. And ſurely, if we rightly conſider things as we ought, this Procedure of God's cannot but lay us low in our own Eyes, make us deeply ſenſible of our own Vileneſs and Unworthineſs, and of the infinite Purity and Holineſs of the Divine Nature, and the immenſe Diſtance between God and Man. For if the holy Patriarchs, that were ſo highly favoured of God, to whom, while on Earth, he frequently exhibited himſelf in a Pillar of Fire, or Cloud of Glory, are not yet admitted to the beatific Viſion; if theſe holy Men, who confeſſed themſelves Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth, are, after ſo many hundred Years paſt, ſtill ſeeking and looking after another Country, that is, *a heavenly:* If *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful, and the Friend of God, is yet arrived to no higher State of Bliſs, than to be the chief or principal Inhabitant of *Paradiſe:* If *Moſes*, who, in the Days of his Fleſh, talked familiarly with God,

God, as a Man talketh with his Friend, that requeſted a Sight of his Glory, and was vouchſafed a tranſient Glimpſe of it, is not yet permitted to *ſee him Face to Face:* What humbling Thoughts ought we to entertain of ourſelves; and how far ſhould we be from expecting, upon our Departure out of this World, to be received immediately into the higheſt Heaven! In a Word, *if the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved*; if all thoſe holy Souls, now in Paradiſe, who are freed from all Temptations, and from all Occaſions of Sinning, are not yet judged meet or worthy to be admitted into the Preſence of God; *Where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?* But,

*Thirdly*, Though the Righteous will not be allowed to approach the Divine Majeſty till after the general Reſurrection, and final Judgment; yet it will be a ſufficient Reward and Satisfaction, in the mean while, to be admitted into the Society of Saints and Angels. For that *Angels* do ſometimes viſit thoſe lower Regions of Heaven, we learn from the Inſtance of *Lazarus*; whoſe Soul *was carried, by Angels, into* Abraham's *Boſom.* As theſe then are the Guardians, appointed by

God, to conduct the Souls of the Righteous into the Manſions of *Paradiſe*; ſo we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that they are often there at other Times, and on other Occaſions. And ſurely it is no mean Degree of Happineſs to be admitted into the Preſence, and to enjoy the Society, of theſe bright miniſtring Spirits, theſe firſt-born Sons of God, who are ſo ready to protect and aſſiſt us here on Earth, and will then, doubtleſs, be as ready to communicate to us the ſublime Myſteries of Heaven, and to encourage our Hope and Expectation of a joyful Reſurrection to Life everlaſting. But beſide theſe occaſional Viſits from *Angels*, every pious Chriſtian, departing this Life, will be conducted to the *general Aſſembly and Church of the Firſt-born, to the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect*, to the bleſſed Company of all the Faithful, of Apoſtles, Saints, and Martyrs; whoſe higher Attainments, and ſuperior Dignity, will be no Diſcouragement to the humble and meaner Chriſtians, or hinder them from approaching their Preſence, and enjoying the Delights of their holy Converſation: Yea, the meaner and more modeſt any of theſe appear to be, the more dear and the more acceptable will

they

they be to thoſe renowned Perſons for Faith and Piety, who were all Meekneſs and Humility, while upon Earth; and will ſhew no leſs Courteſy and Condeſcenſion in thoſe Regions of Peace and Conſolation. And as this will be as much Favour and Happineſs as the Souls of the Righteous muſt expect to enjoy in the Interval between Death and the Reſurrection; ſo this will be abundantly ſufficient, together with a conſtant Supply of Comforts they will receive from above, to ſupport and ſuſtain them during that Period. The loweſt Saint there, is far happier than the moſt proſperous of the Sons of Men here. *There the Wicked ceaſe from Troubling; and there the Weary be at Reſt. There the Priſoners reſt together; they hear not the Voice of the Oppreſſor. The Small and the Great are there; and the Servant is free from his Maſter.* There is no Freedom, indeed, like the Freedom of Souls in *Paradiſe*; a Freedom from Guilt and Pain, from Sin and Satan, from anxious Cares, and fearful Apprehenſions; where they *reſt from all their Labours*, and the Servant is as free as his Maſter. If we deſire to enter into this Reſt, and to partake of this Freedom; we muſt now ceaſe from

Sin, and diſengage ourſelves, as much as poſſible, from the Bondage of Corruption; and live in a conſtant habitual Preparation for our latter End. The Benefit and Opportunity of an *actual* Preparation for Death, is what is denied to many, and what none can promiſe themſelves; but 'tis our own Fault if we are not *habitually* prepared. And, conſidering how very much depends upon this *habitual* Preparation, and how very ſoon we may be ſummoned or ſurpriſed, let us take care to be always well employ'd, to be often clearing our Accounts, and trimming our Lamps; that we may, at laſt, be thought worthy to receive thoſe *better things* which God has provided for us; and, together with the Reſidue of his Saints, be made Partakers of his heavenly Kingdom.

*Now to God the* FATHER, *God the* SON, *and God the* HOLY GHOST, *be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, now and for evermore.*

SER-

# SERMON VI.

## TIME and ETERNITY.

# SERMON VI.

## TIME and ETERNITY.

2 COR. iv. 18.

*The Things which are ſeen are temporal; but the Things which are not ſeen are eternal.*

TIME and ETERNITY are the two grand Diviſions that both include and ſeparate the whole Race of Mankind; widely diſtinguiſhed from each other by the Difference of their States, the Difference of their Duration, and the different Numbers of thoſe that are in each. The former is a State of Penance and Probation; the latter of Recompence and Reward: The one is haſtening to its Period, as faſt as the Swiftneſs of its Wings can carry it; the other is ever permanent and unchangeable, endleſs as a Circle, boundleſs as

the Ocean, and always ſecure from Interruption and Decay. Nor is the Difference much leſs conſiderable, with reſpect to the Numbers of thoſe that poſſeſs the one, and thoſe that inhabit the other. For what is this one *ſingle* Generation of Men, that dwells on the Face of the Earth, or is now contained within the Limits of Time, in Compariſon of thoſe *numerous* Generations, that are gone before into a State of Eternity! And yet, how few are there, of their ſurviveing Poſterity, that think of following them, that ſeriouſly conſider either the State they are now in, or that which they are haſtening to! *The Things which are ſeen* engage their Time, and Labour, and Thoughts; and that becauſe they are too apt to forget that theſe things are *temporal*, or ſoon to have an End; while *the Things that are not ſeen* lie neglected and unminded, though of infinitely greater Value, and endleſs Duration. There are many that wiſh for an Eternity in this World; and others that are for ſhutting out an Eternity from the next: But both agree in this; That *Things inviſible* are no proper Objects for *their* Inquiry and Purſuit, who are ſo eagerly bent upon the Enjoyment

joyment of a *preſent* Felicity, that they have not Patience to wait for *one to come.* Their Judgment is blinded and perverted by the Inordinacy of their Wills; which makes them ſo abſurd in their Choice, as to prefer a created Good before the infinite Creator, Time before Eternity, and the Emblems and Pictures of Happineſs before Happineſs itſelf. Nor are they only miſtaken about the *Things themſelves*, as to their real and reſpective Value, but the very *Terms* and *Expreſſions*, by which theſe are repreſented, are often likewiſe miſapprehended. The Words of the Apoſtle, in my Text, which carry the Appearance of ſo great an Oppoſition, are yet true only in a proper and limited Senſe: For there are ſome *temporal* Things, which partake of *Eternity*; and there are ſome *Things eternal*, which partake of *Time*. I ſhall therefore endeavour to clear and adjuſt this Matter, by ſhewing, according to the natural Order in which St. *Paul* has placed the Words,

*Firſt*, How far *the Things which are ſeen are temporal:* And,

*Secondly*, How far *the Things which are not ſeen are eternal.* And,

*Firſt*,

*Firſt*, By *the Things which are ſeen*, we are to underſtand all that Variety of ſenſible Objects that we meet with in the World. But even this does not include or comprehend *all* that is *temporal:* For there are *ſome* Things *inviſible*, that are partly temporal, and partly eternal: *Temporal*, ſo far as they had a Beginning; and *eternal*, ſo far as they ſhall have no End; and that is, Angels and ſeparate Souls. *Time* is, and ever will be, in the next World, as well as in this, as proper an Attribute of a *Creature*, as *Eternity* is of *God*; *who only has Immortality*, ſtrictly ſpeaking, as St. *Paul* aſſerts. But *Time* commenced with the Creation, and will continue as long as there is a Creature exiſting. The firſt *Creature* was the firſt *temporal* Being. *In the Beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.* There was no *Beginning* before that. It was all one undivided, boundleſs, Ocean of Exiſtence and Duration; when there was nothing but a glorious Godhead, a Trinity in Unity, infinitely and eternally happy in the Enjoyment of itſelf. But whatever *began* to be, or had a Beginning, muſt be always dependent on the Will and Power of him that firſt gave it Being,

ing, and can have no *Neceſſity in itſelf* of Continuance or Duration; and therefore ſuch Continuance is to be eſteemed as no other than a Succeſſion of Beginnings, the *ſecond* Moment of its Exiſtence being as much a *Beginning* as the *firſt*. As every Creature was made originally out of Nothing; ſo, for that Reaſon, he has always a direct and natural Tendency to Diſſolution: And therefore his Support or Continuance in Being can be no other, ſtrictly ſpeaking, than a ſort of continually new Creation; being only upheld by the ſame Almighty Power, which firſt gave him Exiſtence; according to what the Apoſtle affirms, That *in him we live, and move, and have our Being*. In what manner we do ſo, is more than we are, at preſent, able to explain or comprehend: But that it is really ſo in Fact, we may be fully aſſured of, from this one plain Reaſon; That had Man the Power to preſerve himſelf, he would never die. Now this Support, Continuance, or Preſervation, being gradual and progreſſive, comes to be ſubject to the Menſuration of what we call *Time*; that is, the Duration of our Beings is communicated to us from God, not all at once, (for *that* is impoſſible,

poſſible, as we are *Creatures)* but by ſeveral Steps and Degrees, in equal Meaſures and Proportions, one after another, not two Moments or Portions together, but one ſucceeding the other. And as there is a Scale of created Beings in the Univerſe, that riſe gradually, from the loweſt Inſect on Earth, to the higheſt Angel in Heaven: So the Excellency of one above another, is to be known, as by other internal Properties, ſo particularly by the different Degrees of their Duration. Thoſe of the *vegetable* and *animal* Kinds, which are made only for preſent Uſe, and ſubject to the Will of Man, are, for the moſt part, but of ſhort Continuance; ſome of them laſting not much longer than *Jonah*'s Gourd, which *came up in a Night, and periſhed in a Night:* On which account they are to be eſteemed rather as the *Shadows* and *Appearances* of Things, than as the *Reality* and *Subſtance* of them. And ſuch, more or leſs, is the tranſitory and periſhing Nature of *the Things which are ſeen.* Even the *Acquiſitions* and *Poſſeſſions* of Men, ſo ſtudiouſly ſought, and ſo carefully guarded, partake of this Fickleneſs and Uncertainty of Duration, and are of the moſt precarious

carious and contingent Tenure, as they are ſubject to a thouſand Caſualties, and always dependent on the Will of Providence. *Human Bodies* are of the ſame fading and periſhing Nature, continually liable to innumerable Changes and Chances, and, at laſt, to certain Decay and Diſſolution. And yet, after they have ſuffered all the Diſhonours of the Grave, and paſſed from one kind of Corruption to another, and from one Element to another; after they have been reduced to their primitive State of Duſt, and been driven about upon the four Winds; after, I ſay, all this Variety of Changes and Alterations, not the leaſt Particle of them is loſt, annihilated, or utterly deſtroy'd. All the Art and Power of Man, and all the Force and Strength of Nature, and even that ſtrongeſt Enemy, Death itſelf, cannot reduce into Nothing the ſmalleſt Grain. They may render it *inviſible* to the naked Eye, but cannot make it *immaterial*, *null*, or *void*. 'Tis ſtill in Being, ſtill ſubſiſting; not one Atom is miſſing, not one come to nought. No; no leſs Power than that which formed all things out of Nothing, is able to reduce the ſmalleſt Part of Matter to Nothing again. So that,

in

in this Senſe, the *Bodies* of Men are as *immortal* as their Souls: For though *Man lieth down, and riſeth not till the Heavens be no more*; though he moulder into Duſt, and crumble into Aſhes, he is ſtill in this, as well as his other Part, under the Care and Inſpection of an all-ſeeing God, who at firſt *created him to be immortal, and made him to be an Image of his own Eternity*. But by the Fall he is become ſubject to Vanity and Death, and muſt now ſubmit to a total Ceſſation of his inferior Part for ſome time, till he can recover that endleſs Life, and bliſsful Immortality, he was originally deſigned for. Man therefore, at preſent, is to be looked upon as a *temporal* Being, of few Days, and of ſhort Continuance: He is *born* ſo, when he comes into the World; and may be ſaid to bring and carry *Time* along with him, not only with reſpect to the Age he is born in, nor only with reſpect to the outward Revolutions of the heavenly Bodies, which are appointed for Signs and Seaſons; but with regard likewiſe to the inward Frame of his own Body, which, by the wiſe Contrivance of its Maker, conſtantly obſerves and points out the Meaſure and Motion of Time; the Pulſe,

Pulſe, in his Arteries, beating Time as regularly, as the moſt curious and beſt Piece of Clock-work can do. And when this Pulſe ſtrikes irregularly, or begins to intermit, 'tis commonly a Symptom and Forerunner of approaching Death, and that the Man is paſſing from Time into Eternity. And from thenceforward he is to be reckon'd among *the Things that are not ſeen.* And this brings me,

In the *ſecond* Place, to conſider how far, or in what Senſe, *the Things which are not ſeen are eternal.*

Things *eternal*, and *Eternity*, are ſpoken of in Scripture both *properly* and *improperly*. *Strictly* and *properly*, this Attribute belongs to *none but God*, who alone can be ſaid to be *from everlaſting to everlaſting*, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, which is the true and juſt Notion of Eternity. In a *lower* and *leſs proper* Senſe, *Angels* may be ſaid to be *eternal*, as they are ſaid to be *Gods*, becauſe they have a ſpiritual and immortal Nature beſtow'd on them, and were ordain'd from the firſt Moment of their Creation, to live on for ever, without any Intermiſſion at all of their Being. In the ſame Senſe the Souls of Men may be

ſaid

ſaid to be naturally immortal, being made to partake of the ſame endleſs Duration. And in this Senſe alſo, the *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* of the next World are *eternal*, becauſe from the Moment they commence, they will continue on, without Intermiſſion, and without End. In an *improper* and *figurative* Senſe, there are ſome Things *merely temporal*, which yet are ſpoken of in Scripture as *eternal*. Thus we read of the *everlaſting Mountains*, and the *perpetual Hills*, which are ſo call'd only on this account, as they are the moſt ſenſible Emblems or Repreſentations of Eternity in the preſent State of Things, becauſe Time ſeems to have made no Change or Alteration in them. Now from this Account of the different Acceptations of the Word *Eternal* in Scripture, we ſhall be the better able to form a right Notion of *Things inviſible*, which are here commended for this peculiar Excellency, that they ſhall never end. *The Things which are not ſeen are eternal.* Here then we muſt obſerve, that when *Eternity* is attributed to *God*, 'tis vaſtly different from *that Eternity*, which is aſcrib'd to *Angels* and *Men*. For *theſe* had a Beginning, but *God*'s Eternity is without

without Beginning, as well as without End. Beſides, *their* Duration, even in a State of Eternity, muſt ſtill be meaſur'd by *Time*, or go on in a way of Succeſſion: But God's is all at once, co-exiſtent with all Time, paſt, preſent, and future. He is preſent with that which is paſt, and preſent with that which is to come. All Creatures, and all that belongs to them, are ſubject to Motion; but God, tho' he be the *Firſt Mover*, is unmov'd himſelf; and therefore his Age is always the ſame, and contains in itſelf the utmoſt Poſſibility of Duration. There is nothing *before* or *after* in God; and tho' the Scriptures often ſpeak of his *foreſeeing* and *foreknowing* diſtant Events, and future Contingencies; yet this is ſpoken only in Condeſcenſion to our finite Nature and Underſtanding, which can't comprehend or form any perfect Notion of Things infinite, boundleſs, and eternal; but only of ſuch Things as are divided into Parts or Periods, and ſucceed one another. Nor will our beſt-inlarg'd Faculties, even in the next World, be ever able to comprehend one ſimple infinite Duration, which is what we now mean by *God's Eternity*. Nor will our Enjoyments in the other World be, in this

 reſpect,

reſpect, like unto God's, ſince the Finiteneſs of our Nature and Underſtanding will ſtil render it impoſſible for *us* to contemplate or enjoy *any other* there than the *preſent*, or *any otherwiſe*, than in the way of *Limitation* and *Succeſſion*. But then this Enjoyment will be continued on to eternal Ages; and ſo what we can't graſp or take in at one View, we may at another, and ſo on ſucceſſively thro' the numberleſs Ages of Eternity. But now God contemplates and enjoys all at once: He takes a Proſpect of univerſal Nature at one ſingle View, and ſees to the utmoſt Limits of Futurity, even *from everlaſting to everlaſting*, and *there is nothing wonderful before him*. *Known unto God are all his Works*, ſays the Apoſtle, *from the Foundation of the World*. Not only his Nature and Eſſence, but his Counſels and Decrees are from Eternity. *His ways are everlaſting*, ſays the Prophet. His all-comprehenſive View gathers, as it were, into one Point, the full Compaſs, and whole Extent of Being. He *now* beholds with Pleaſure, what at firſt he pronounced very good, the Formation of Man, and the Creation of the World. He *now* rejoices in the more laſting

Work

Work of Redemption, and is even *now preſent* to all the Songs of Praiſe and Thankſgiving, to all the Anthems and Hallelujahs, that will be performed by the whole Church Triumphant, after the general Judgment: So that as he is, in reſpect of his *Eſſence*, equally preſent in all Places; ſo, with reſpect to his *Duration*, he is equally preſent to all Times, to all the numberleſs Succeſſions and Revolutions of Ages, both in Time and in Eternity. *Succeſſion* has no Place in him: Every Moment he poſſeſſes and enjoys a whole Eternity; yea, every Moment is a whole Eternity with God, becauſe there is no Part, or Period, or Atom of Time, wherein the *Whole* of the divine Eternity does not ſubſiſt. *Time* is not, as is commonly ſuppoſed, a Thing taken out of, and ſeparated from Eternity, as a Point taken out, or divided from a Line or Circle, whoſe Extremities are ſuppoſed to be boundleſs and indiſcernible: For *Time* is the *ſame*, with reſpect to *God*, as *Eternity*; and *Eternity* is the *ſame*, with reſpect to *Man*, as *Time*. The one is ſucceſſive, the other always inſtantaneous. When we read in Scripture, that a Period is coming, when *Time ſhall be no more*, the Meaning of

this can't be, that *Creatures*, which, are and ever will be finite and limited, and continue in a way of Succeſſion, ſhall live in the other World *without* Time, or be eternal, as God is, reaching at once into an Infinity of Ages: But *ſo far Time ſhall be no more*, that it ſhall not be meaſur'd, as it is now, by Nights and Days, or by the riſing and ſetting of the Sun. When the Scripture ſpeaks of *Time*, it ſpeaks of it with reſpect to *this World*; and therefore the *End of Time*, according to that, ſignifies either *in general* the World's Diſſolution, or *as to Particulars*, each Man's departing out of the World: But that there ſhall ſtill be *Time*, even in the State of Eternity, that is, a Duration, with reſpect to the Creature, that is continued and ſucceſſive, can't, I think, be denied or diſputed. We may truly and properly ſay of the *firſt Man*, (who is now *alive unto God*; *for all live unto him*) that he is near as *old* as the Creation; and of the *elect Angels*, that they have now continued about *ſix thouſand Years*. But when God ſpeaks of himſelf, or of his own Duration, he ſpeaks in another ſort of Style and Manner—*I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the Firſt and the Laſt*,

*Laſt, which was, and is, and is to come.* As if he had ſaid, At this Inſtant of ſpeaking, I am *Omega* as well as *Alpha*, the *Laſt* as well as the *Firſt*; and though I give Limits and Bounds to all other Things, am unlimited and unbounded myſelf, and ſubſiſt by one indiviſible Duration, that knows neither Beginning nor End. So that God's Eternity will always *precede* Man's Immortality; the one will ever be *before* the other. *He* will ever be the *laſt*, as he is the firſt, and ſtill contemplate and enjoy himſelf *beyond* the utmoſt Reach and Cemprehenſion of the Creature, even when made Partaker of his own Eternity. For the *Immortality* of the Creature is, and can be, no other than a ſucceſſive Continuance in Being, crown'd with this gracious Promiſe, that it ſhall never have on End. But in *Reality*, and even in *Idea*, it can never reach, or become parallel or commenſurate with the *Divine Eternity*, becauſe 'tis always growing and increaſing; whereas the other is permanent, fixed, and immutable, always one and the ſame, *the ſame Yeſterday, To-day, and for ever.* When we are receiv'd into everlaſting Habitations, and have ſpent Thouſands and Millions of

Years in thoſe bleſſed Manſions, we may ſtill look back, and calculate the Number of Years and Ages, ſince our firſt Entrance into the Regions of Light. In a farther Proceſs indeed, we ſhall be got beyond the Power of *Numeration*, and the utmoſt Stretch of *Arithmetic*; ſo that we ſhall *ſeem* to have enjoy'd an *Eternity paſt*, and yet all that will be as nothing to the *real* Eternity that is to come, and ever will be *ſtill to come*.

And now, from this great and important Subject, I ſhall beg leave to draw ſome Inferences and Obſervations, in relation both to Faith and Practice.

*Firſt* then, The true Notion of Eternity, as I have ſtated it, with relation to God, will help us to diſcover the Fallacy and Abſurdity of a certain Poſition or Doctrine, that may accidentally have miniſtred Occaſion to Scepticiſm and Infidelity, and done great Prejudice to Revealed Religion; I mean, the Attempt of ſome Men to demonſtrate the Being and Attributes of God, by what they call an Argument *à priori*, that is, an Attempt to prove the Being of God, by ſomething *in* God himſelf, *excluſive of his Works of Creation*. The Medium or Argument they

they take to prove this by, is *neceſſary Exiſtence*, which is with them, as it were, the Prop and Support of the Deity. But it may be ask'd, how they can, leaving out the *viſible Creation*, prove any ſuch thing as *neceſſary Exiſtence*? And if we ſhould ſuppoſe them ſo happy, (which yet is impoſſible) as to find out *another Medium* to prove *neceſſary Exiſtence* by, it will be expected that they ſhould evince this by another Argument, and that again by a third, and ſo on *in Infinitum*. For, in ſhort, that which is *eternal*, and had no Beginning, has nothing in itſelf, or in our Conception of it, that can afford us any ſatisfactory or demonſtrable Proof of any *Cauſe* or *Neceſſity* of the Divine Nature; and we may as well pretend to find out a *Beginning* in Eternity, as to diſcover a *Firſt Principle* in the Deity. The *Scripture*-Argument for the Being of a God, it taken from his Works of Creation; and St. *Paul* thought this Argument ſo abundantly ſufficient for this purpoſe, as to render the *Heathens* inexcuſeable. *For the inviſible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the Things which are made, even his eternal Power and*

*Godhead; ſo that they are without Excuſe.* Seeing then that we have ſo plain and convincing an Argument in Proof of a God, what occaſion is there to fly to abſtruſe metaphyſical Notions, that have no Foundation in Scripture, and that are not reconcileable with the Principles of ſound Reaſon? Let us only ſuppoſe a Man to be born *blind*, *deaf*, and *dumb*, what Notion do we think, could ſuch an one have of this *material* World, or of *Colours*, *Muſic*, and *Language?* And if the Things which are made, were to be abſtracted, and Mankind were left to frame their Notion of God, in this State of Corruption, from *Reaſon alone*, or from the *Nature of God*, without conſidering the Works of Creation, what ſtrange Conceptions would they be apt to form to themſelves of his Power, Wiſdom, and Eſſence! How would they prove the *Neceſſity* of his Being; or be able to ſhew that *one* of his Perfections is the *Cauſe* and Reaſon of all the reſt? For as there is nothing *before* or *after* in God; ſo 'tis impoſſible for us to frame a Notion (according to Scripture or Reaſon) of any ſuch thing as a Ground or Superſtructure in the Deity. The moſt

ſimple

ſimple and moſt comprehenſive Idea that we can poſſibly form of the Divine Being, is that which is given us by God himſelf, in that Declaration of his to *Moſes*, I AM THAT I AM, and ſimply, I AM; which does not declare his *Eſſence* abſtractedly from his *Exiſtence*, or his *Exiſtence* abſtractedly from his *Eſſence*, or his *Eſſence* and *Exiſtence* abſtractedly from his *Attributes*, or *one* Attribute ſeparately from *another*; but reveals and diſcovers to us his *whole* Being at once, without any Diviſion or Diſtinction, without any Ground or Foundation, which is wholly and abſolutely in and of himſelf. To talk then of the *Ground* or Reaſon of the Deity, is (to ſay no worſe) very improper and abſurd, unſcriptural and unphiloſophical. This is a Language that belongs only to created Beings; but is no way ſuitable to the *Divine Nature*, or even to our finite and inadequate Conception of it. He that *hanged the Earth upon nothing*, which ſtands ſo much in need of a Prop or Foundation, can never want any Ground or Foundation for his own Being. And to talk of any ſuch, is talking altogether in the dark. We may as well argue, that God is *neceſſarily exiſting*, becauſe he is

*eternal*,

*eternal*, as that he is *eternal*, becauſe he is *neceſſarily exiſting*. All the Divine Perfections are without Bounds, without Beginning, and without Cauſe. And who then can preſume to ſay, or aſſert, *which one* of them is the Ground, Reaſon, or Foundation of the reſt? If we are ſo ignorant of our *own Nature*, as not to be able to explain or conceive, *which* of all the Faculties is the inmoſt Prop and Support of a *human Soul*, whether the *Will*, or the *Underſtanding*, or its *general Faculty of Thinking*, or to prove and determine whether the Soul be naturally immortal, or how it is united to, and ſeparated from, the Body; if theſe things, I ſay, relating to ourſelves, are ſo unſearchable, and paſt finding out; ſhall we preſume to fathom the infinite and incomprehenſible Nature and Attributes of God, either of which is more than enough to puzzle and confound the brighteſt Intellect of Men and Angels? 'Tis ſufficient for us to know and underſtand, *by the Things that are made*, that there muſt be ſome wiſe Maker of them, who is the original Cauſe of all Things, but un-originate himſelf, independent, and ſelf-exiſtent, eternally and unchangeably the ſame. And beyond this no

Thought

Thought can reach: And whoever ſhall attempt any thing farther, in Proof of the Deity, will ſoon find himſelf ſwallowed up in a dark Abyſs of Uncertainty, Error, and Confuſion.

*Secondly*, From the Diſtinction between *Time* and *Eternity*, or the Difference between that *Eternity* which belongs only to *God*, and that which is attributed to *Creatures*, we may form a juſt and ſtrong Argument in Proof of our Saviour's Divinity. For if he is poſſeſs'd of the *Divine Eternity*, he muſt of Neceſſity be God, in the higheſt Senſe of that Word. For nothing but God is or can be *without Beginning*, as well as without End. But if he has only *that Eternity*, which belongs to, or is beſtow'd on the *Creature*, which is gradual and ſucceſſive, how then can he judge the World? To be qualified for this, he muſt have a perfect View and Knowledge at once of all the Thoughts, Words, and Actions of all Mankind, from the Beginning to the End of Time; which is abſolutely impoſſible to a Creature, and utterly inconſiſtent with a ſucceſſive Duration; which takes in only what is preſent, and arrives by ſlow Degrees to what is future, and at a Diſtance. If *Chriſt* then be not ſtrictly and properly *eternal*, he muſt

muſt be perfectly unqualified in himſelf, to foreſee future Events, and to judge all the Actions of Men. And therefore our Church, in her Addreſs to him in the Burial-Office, moſt fitly joins theſe two together, *O holy and merciful Saviour, thou moſt worthy* JUDGE ETERNAL! For if he be *Judge*, he muſt be *eternal*. But his *Knowledge* can't be extended farther than his *Being*. If this be limited, finite, and ſucceſſive, the other muſt be ſo too. But this is directly contrary to what he diſcover'd and declared of himſelf, while he was upon Earth, when he not only foreſaw and foretold many things to come, but by ſeveral Inſtances proved himſelf to be *the Searcher of Hearts*, and a Diſcerner of the moſt ſecret Intents and Purpoſes of Men. And therefore St. *John* expreſly aſſerts, that *Jeſus did not commit himſelf unto ſome, becauſe he knew all Men, and needed not that any ſhould teſtify of Man; for he knew what was in Man.* Now this is allow'd to be the peculiar Property and Prerogative of God, and incommunicable to any Creature, according to thoſe Words of *Solomon* in his Conſecration-Prayer —— *Thou only knoweſt the Hearts of the Children*

*Children of Men.* But this the Evangeliſt affirms of our Bleſſed Saviour, in the fulleſt manner, namely, that *he knew all Men, and knew what was in* MAN in general; which muſt include not only that preſent Generation, but all that were paſt, and all that were to come; which we can no way conceive or account for, without allowing him to be equally preſent to all Time, that is, equally eternal with God the Father; and if he be equally eternal, he muſt be equally God. And this is no other, than what he has fully and emphatically declared of himſelf in his Viſion and Meſſage to St. *John* ---*I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending*, ſaith the Lord, *which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.* And again, *I am Alpha and Omega, the Firſt and the Laſt.* And once more, *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Firſt and the Laſt.* And that theſe three ſeveral Declarations, ſo fully expreſſive of a *proper Eternity*, do really belong to, and were ſpoken by, our bleſſed Lord, will be plain and clear to any one that ſhall carefully read and conſult the Context in each of thoſe Places. And this alone, were there

there no other Proof, is ſufficient to ſettle and confirm any private Chriſtian, in a right Belief of this moſt neceſſary and important Article of the Chriſtian Faith, *the Divinity of our Bleſſed Saviour*. But,

*Thirdly*, The Doctrine I have been conſidering, will help to regulate our *Practice*, as well as our *Faith*. The different Excellency of Things is to be meaſured and judged of, not only by their internal Properties, but according to the different Degrees of their Duration. *The Things which are ſeen are temporal*, ſays the Apoſtle; *but the Things which are not ſeen are eternal*. This is their diſtinguiſhing Character. But were we to judge of them by the general Conduct and Behaviour of Chriſtians, we ſhould conclude, That the things which are *ſeen* are *eternal*, and the Things which are *not ſeen*, only *temporal*. For that Care, Diligence, and Aſſiduity, that is due to the one, is now too commonly employ'd upon the other. Did Men purſue the Things of *Eternity*, with half the Zeal and Induſtry, with which they purſue the tranſitory Things of *this Life*, they could not fail of ſecuring to themſelves a Bliſs unſpeakable, and full of Glory. Indeed the Things of the other

other World labour under this Diſadvantage, that they are diſtant and inviſible, whereas thoſe of this Life are preſent, and always before us. But one would think, the Shortneſs and Uncertainty of the one, and the eternal Duration of the other, were more than ſufficient to counter-balance this ſmall Difference or Diſadvantage. And ſo they certainly would, did Men walk more by Faith, and leſs by Sight; or exerciſe and employ their Faith, more than they uſually do, on things inviſible and eternal; which is not only the ſureſt way to obtain them, but the beſt Method likewiſe that we can take to preſerve ſomething of Conſtancy and Uniformity in our Conduct, amidſt the manifold Changes and Chances of this mortal State. For Mens Tempers, like the Things of this World, are ſo very fickle and variable, and ſo very apt to be carried about with every ſhifting Wind of Time, and Chance, and Paſſion, that till they come to fix upon ſomething that is durable, or to ſet their Affections on Things above, they will either be unſtable in all their Ways, or in continual Danger of falling from their own Stedfaſtneſs. He therefore, that deſires to hold

hold the Profeſſion of his Faith without wavering, and to make his Calling and Election ſure, muſt have a ſpecial Regard to *the Things which are not ſeen*, and fix his Thoughts, his Hopes, and his Deſires, upon that final and eternal State, that awaits him in the next World, and make this the Compaſs by which he ſteers all his Deſigns and Actions. And he that does ſo, will, by the Help of Divine Grace, in the midſt of a World of Caſualties and Uncertainties, be ſteady in his Purpoſes, uniform in his Conduct, and conſiſtent with himſelf; neither veering in his Opinion, nor ſtaggering in his Faith, nor careleſs in his Practice; but, whatever Dangers or Difficulties he may meet with, will *preſs toward the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus*, and make it his conſtant Care and Endeavour ſo to *paſs through Things temporal, as finally not to loſe the Things eternal.*

*Now to the King Eternal, Immortal, Inviſible, Three Perſons and One* GOD, *be aſcrib'd, as is moſt due, all Honour, Power, Might, Majeſty, and Dominion, now and for evermore.* Amen.

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# SERMON VII.

## The Joys and Glories of the Heavenly State.

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1 Cor. ii. 9.

*Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

WE find our Bleſſed Saviour, in the forty Days he ſpent upon Earth, between his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion, converſing frequently with his Diſciples, and *ſpeaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* And as no Subject can be more proper or ſeaſon-

able at this Juncture *; ſo, doubtleſs, the great Things of the other World, for which we were created, and to which we ſhould direct the main Courſe of our Lives, would move and affect us more powerfully and forcibly than they do, if we did but daily attend to their Weight and Importance, and ſeriouſly conſider the very near Concern and Intereſt that we have in them. But they lie under this Diſadvantage, that they are diſtant and inviſible: *Neither can the natural Man know them becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* They are the Objects of Faith, and not of Senſe. *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard them.* So St. *Paul* affirms in this Place, though he declares in another, even in his next Epiſtle, that he himſelf had both ſeen and heard them. But we muſt obſerve, that the Apoſtle cites the Paſſage in my Text from the Prophet *Iſaiah*, and introduces it with ſaying, *As it is written.* When the Prophet wrote this, none had heard or ſeen thoſe Things (ſo as to give Mankind any Information thereof); but ſince that Time, this bleſſed Apoſtle had been admitted to this high Pri-

* *This Sermon was preach'd* May 27, 1739.

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vilege and Favour, *whether in the Body, or out of the Body, he could not tell*; but this he knew, that he had been *caught up into the third Heaven, and into Paradiſe*; and there *heard unſpeakable Words, which it was not lawful*, or poſſible, *for a Man to utter*. The Language of Heaven, it ſeems, is too ſpiritual and refin'd for our preſent Underſtandings, and not to be learnt in this Life. For this great Apoſtle tells the *Corinthians*, that he heard in Paradiſe *unſpeakable* Words. *Words* they were, but ſuch as he was not able or permitted to deliver to them, or make them apprehend the Meaning of. Nay, in the Words of the Text, as cited from *Iſaiah*, he farther aſſures us, that neither is the *Heart* of Man able to conceive, or to frame any juſt Idea of, the *Things which God has prepared for them that love him*. But then at the ſame time he affirms, that *God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit*; i. e. To help and condeſcend to our Infirmities, he has been pleas'd to repreſent theſe things to us, under a great Variety of ſignificant Figures, and lively Emblems, and to give us up and down, in the ſacred Writings, as far as we can at preſent comprehend it, a full or

ſufficient Deſcription of the heavenly *Canaan*. And therefore, though St. *John* obſerves, that *it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be*; and St. *Paul*, that *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard*, the many excellent and glorious Things that are *ſpoken of the City of God:* Yet *enough* is reveal'd to enlighten our Minds, to incline our Wills, to warm our Hearts, and to guide our Steps in Purſuit of the promiſed Reward, if we be only careful ourſelves to *ſearch the Scriptures*, and to *compare ſpiritual Things with ſpiritual*. But 'tis our forgetting theſe things, or our Neglect to ſet them often before our Eyes, that cauſes firſt a weak and wavering Faith, and then a lame and liſtleſs Practice. This is the true Reaſon of our going on ſo heavily, and that we make ſo ſlow and ſmall a Progreſs in the Ways of Chriſtian Piety and Virtue. *The Men of this World*, in this reſpect, *are wiſer in their Generation, than the Children of Light. Who goeth a Warfare*, and doth not animate and encourage himſelf to the Combat, by the Hope and Proſpect of Victory and Triumph? Who *runneth in a Race*, and doth not view the *Prize* beforehand, and then ſtrive all he can to obtain it? *Whatſoever thou takeſt in Hand*,

*Hand*, ſays the Son of *Sirach*, *remember the End, and thou ſhalt never do amiſs.* The ſure and lively Hope of the future Recompence would *lift up the Hands that hang down, and ſtrengthen the feeble Knees*, and enable us to undergo any Labours, to undertake any Difficulties, to encounter any Dangers, and make us *run with Patience the Race that is ſet before us.* The Account which the Apoſtle gives in my Text, and the Prophet before him, of the preſent Inviſibility of the Things of the other World, and of our preſent Incapacity to form a juſt or adequate Conception of them, is not deſign'd to damp and diſcourage us; but on the contrary, to inflame our Deſires, and to excite and quicken our Endeavours in Purſuit of ſuch glorious Things, as far ſurpaſs all the preſent Objects of Senſe, and are indeed unutterable and inconceivable. For *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit.* Which Words are ſpoken and uſed by the Apoſtle only occaſionally, or by way of Accommodation to the Subject

he was upon, namely, *the Crucifixion of the Lord of Glory.* But I ſhall conſider them as containing a general Doctrine of the higheſt Conſequence, and greateſt Importance; *viz.* the tranſcendent Excellency of that glorious Reward, which is reſerv'd in Heaven for us; which far exceeds not only the utmoſt Force of Words, but even all that 'tis poſſible to wiſh or imagine; with which there is nothing worthy to be compar'd, or even ſo much as named. And therefore he calls it, in another Place, *a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory:* A Weight ſo ſolid, ſo ſubſtantial, and ſo durable, that 'tis not to be waſted by Age, nor impair'd by Accident, nor ſubject to any Diminution or Decay. And ſince God has been pleas'd, out of his abundant Goodneſs, and tender Mercy, to invite and draw us to himſelf by ſuch Bands of Love, by the Promiſe of ſuch great and glorious Things, as he has reveal'd unto us by his Spirit, I ſhall now endeavour, by his Aſſiſtance, to repreſent to you, from the Holy Scriptures, firſt in general, and then more particularly and diſtinctly, the Joys and Glories of the Heavenly State. In conceiving of which, we muſt be careful to abſtract

tract and ſeparate in our Minds whatever is corrupt, troubleſome, and imperfect. For this is a State of ſinleſs Purity, unſpotted Holineſs, and complete Happineſs. No unclean Thing can enter or dwell there. No Mixture of Guilt, no Taint of Corruption, no Contagion of Sin, no Reliques of the Old Man, will find a Place in the Realms of Light. As God is of *purer Eyes, than to behold Iniquity*; ſo he is of a purer Nature, than to ſuffer *any Evil to dwell with him.* There muſt be a thorough Purification of the Soul, to prepare it for a bliſsful Immortality, and enable it to ſuſtain the full Rays of celeſtial Glory. Therefore are the Bleſſed above repreſented as *cloathed in white Garments, which is the Righteouſneſs of the Saints*; and as having *waſhed their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb:* Therefore is *Chriſt* ſaid to *preſent to himſelf a glorious Church, not having Spot or Wrinkle, or any ſuch thing; but that it ſhould be holy, and without Blemiſh.* And therefore are God's Elect ſaid to *appear unblameable and unreproveable in his Sight*; and to be *preſented faultleſs before the Preſence of his Glory, with exceeding Joy.* And as there will be nothing

nothing of *Sin* in the Heavenly State: So, by Conſequence, none of the *penal* Effects of it can then remain. *For the former Things are paſt away.* There will then be no more Cauſe or Room for Complaint; no more Diſquiet, Vexation, or Trouble; Sorrow and Anguiſh will flee away: The laſt Enemy ſhall be deſtroy'd, and Death itſelf ſwallow'd up in Victory. Nor will there be any natural Blemiſhes, Defects, or Imperfections, among the Saints in Light, which are *the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect.* All Defects will be ſhaken off with our Mortality, and *what is ſown in Weakneſs will be raiſed* in Power and Perfection. The Inheritance of the Saints is *an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* The State of the Bleſſed is a State of the utmoſt Stability and Security, imperiſhable and unchangeable, always fix'd, ſerene, and chearful: Where there is all Light, and no Darkneſs; all Day, and no Night; all Joy and Triumph, and no Trouble or Sadneſs; all Love and Peace and Harmony, and no Diſcord, Adverſary, or evil Occurrent: Where all is raviſhing and tranſporting, and yet calm and ſedate: Where there is Knowledge without

out Learning, Reverence without Fear, Affection without Partiality, and Fulneſs without Cloying: Yea, where there is always ſuch a preſent Fulneſs of Enjoyment, as if nothing more or greater could be had; and yet ſuch a conſtant Succeſſion of new Delights, as if little or nothing had been enjoy'd before: Where the pleaſing Remembrance and Experience of what is paſt and preſent, heightens and inlarges the Proſpect of what is to come; and the abſolute Aſſurance of an endleſs Futurity ſecures the bleſſed Inhabitants from all Fear of Loſs, or Thought of Deprivation: Where the brighter Felicity of ſome does not hinder or obſcure the leſſer of others; but all the Saints poſſeſs the higheſt Happineſs their ſeveral Natures are capable of; and yet one Saint differs from another in Station and Degree, as *one Star differeth from another Star in Glory:* Where the nobleſt of our Senſes will be gratified to the full with the Viſion of God, and the Songs of Angels: Where we ſhall be continually making new Diſcoveries, and improving our intellectual Faculties, and moral Endowments; and *be ever learning, and never able to come to the* full

*Knowledge*

*Knowledge of the Truth:* Where Children will have more Underſtanding than their Teachers here, and Babes and Sucklings be able to ſet forth the Praiſes of their Maker: In a Word, where the Faculties of all will be inlarg'd and proportion'd, in ſome meaſure, to the Objects; and the Soul made capable of contemplating and underſtanding, in a clear and ſatisfactory manner, the Works of Creation, the Wonders of Providence, the Nature of God, and the Myſteries of our Redemption. *Now we ſee through a Glaſs darkly, but then Face to Face; now we know in part, but then ſhall we know even as alſo we are known.*

St. *John* tells us, and our own Experience aſſures us, that *it does not yet appear what we ſhall be*; and therefore 'tis impoſſible for us to know at preſent all the Ingredients of future Happineſs, or all the Particulars that make up the Felicity of Heaven. However, as there are four Particulars, among others, that will help to give us a ſtrong and lively Idea of the Joys of the Bleſſed, and are abundantly ſufficient to excite and quicken our Deſires and Endeavours after the Heavenly State, I chooſe

to

to ſpeak to theſe more particularly at this time.

The *Firſt* is, That there will be no Repugnancy or Oppoſition between God's Will and ours, which is the firſt and general Cauſe of all the Sin and Miſery that is in the World. The *Second* is, That there will be no Pride or Envy among the Inhabitants of Heaven, which are two of the greateſt Obſtructions to Happineſs here. The *Third* is, That we ſhall be admitted to *ſee God as he is*, and by ſeeing ſhall be transform'd, more and more, into his Likeneſs, which will raiſe human Nature to the higheſt Degrees of Perfection 'tis capable of. And the *Fourth* and laſt Particular is, That the Saints will enjoy this beatifick Viſion of God to all Eternity, which is the Crown and Completion of all Felicity.

*Firſt*, In the Heavenly State there will be no Repugnancy or Oppoſition between God's Will and ours, which is the firſt and general Cauſe of all the Sin and Miſery we meet with in the World.

The Will of God is the ſovereign Controuler of all things in Heaven and Earth, viſible and inviſible; the Foundation of all Morality,

Morality, the Standard and Meaſure of all Right and Equity, being no other than the Reſult of unerring Wiſdom, and infinite Juſtice and Goodneſs. What *theſe* propound and preſcribe, the *Will* approves, executes, and performs. Nor is the *Power* of God any other, in Effect, than the Exertion and Manifeſtation of his Will. There was a Divine Conſultation between the ſacred Perſons of the Trinity, upon the Creation of the World, and particularly upon the Formation of Man; after which the Will of God diſplay'd its Prerogative, as deſcrib'd by *Moſes* in theſe Words——*Let there be Light, and there was Light*; i. e. God form'd the Creatures by only *willing* them into Being: His Will in this Caſe was the ſame as his Power. And according to this Will of God, which is the Pattern of all Perfection, not only Man was created at firſt, but all the Laws by which he was to be govern'd, were made and ordain'd. Theſe Laws are either moral or poſitive: The *moral* are founded in the preſent Nature of Things; and the *poſitive* are ſuch, as may have, and ſometimes actually have, no other *apparent* Ground or Reaſon for them, than the *Will* and *Pleaſure* of him that

that gave them; and are therefore ſubject to Change and Abrogation, binding only ſo far, and for ſo long a time, as he has thought fit to determine; whereas the other are ſaid to be eternal and immutable: But this can be ſtrictly true, only with reſpect to the preſent Frame and Conſtitution of Things. For had God made and ordain'd things otherwiſe, new moral Laws would have been neceſſary, and many of thoſe we now have, might have been uſeleſs. There is then ſome natural Variableneſs even in theſe: But the Rectitude of the Divine Will is inflexibly and unchangeably the ſame. And conſequently the more we are conform'd to the Will of God, the more we partake of Conſtancy and Perfection. The more we deny our own Wills here, the more we ſhall have them fulfill'd to us hereafter. The leſs we ſtudy to pleaſe ourſelves, the more we ſhall pleaſe God; and the more we pleaſe him in this Life, the more abundant Kindneſs will he ſhew us in the next. But while we follow our own vain Fancies or Inclinations in Oppoſition to the Will of God, we run away from true Happineſs, and bid adieu to Peace and Tranquillity of Mind. What we call *Self-Love*

and

and *Self-preſervation*, are generally no other in reality, than *Self-hatred* and *Self-deſtruction*. 'Tis only favouring the *animal* Part of ourſelves in Prejudice to the *ſpiritual*, and a cheriſhing the *Body* in its Inſolence and Rebellion againſt the *Soul*, and then drawing the Soul in likewiſe as a Partner in Rebellion againſt its Maker. The fatal Conſequence of which is, a *partial* Separation here, and without true Repentance and Amendment, a *total* Separation hereafter from the Preſence of him, who is the Fountain of Life, Joy, and Happineſs. Till therefore the Will of Man be brought into Subjection to the Will of God, there can be no true Peace, Safety, or Felicity. The Deſign of all his Laws is to remove the Oppoſition that ſubſiſts between them, and has ſubſiſted ever ſince the Fall. And the reducing our rebellious Wills into a State of Obedience, as 'tis a Work of Time and Difficulty, of ſore Pains and Travail, is what the Scriptures underſtand and denote by the *Circumciſion of the Spirit*, by *crucifying the old Man with the Affections and Luſts*, by *cutting off a right Hand*, and *plucking out a right Eye*, by Self-revenge, Mortification, and Self-denial. While we

follow the Bent of our own Inclinations, and gratify and indulge our own Wills, in Contradiction to the reveal'd or providential Will of Heaven, we are incapable, and even inſenſible of the Happineſs which God deſigns for us. And when we ſet ourſelves to oppoſe, ſubdue, and mortify our perverſe Wills, and ſenſual Deſires, ſuch Diſcipline, Reſtraint, and Severity, will create in us for a time no ſmall Trouble and Uneaſineſs. But in Heaven all Oppoſition to the Will of God, and all our painful Labours to bring our Wills in Subjection to him, will entirely ceaſe: And not only the Oppoſition itſelf, but the very Ground and Occaſion of it, will be removed. There will then be no inbred Corruption to moleſt and exerciſe us, no tempting Occaſions to try our Virtue, and prove our Sincerity, no outward Calamities to vex and diſquiet us. Between God's Will and ours, there will then be a perfect Harmony, no Reluctance, no Contrariety; but both will move in Concert together, and one rejoice in the Completion of the other. We ſhall then *deſire* nothing but what is agreeable to the Divine Will, and want nothing that we can deſire. Our largeſt Deſires will then be gratified by him, who

is able and ready to do abundantly above all that we can ask or think. *He will ſatisfy the empty Soul, and fill the hungry Soul with Goodneſs.* *Here*, when we are reſign'd to the Will of God, we are ſtill ſubject to Suffering; *there* we ſhall be reſign'd too, but with the utmoſt Pleaſure and Satisfaction. A perfect Submiſſion to the Divine Will in this Life (which is the Caſe of the Martyrs) has ſometimes been recompenſed here, with ſuch an abundant Meaſure of inward Joy and Conſolation, that their Supports have exceeded their Agonies, and made them not feel, or forget, their Pains. And if ſuch has been ſometimes the Portion of reſign'd Souls in the midſt of Flames, and under Racks and Tortures, what exquiſite and raviſhing Delights muſt await them, in a Place abounding with Joy and Happineſs? 'Tis one Part of that excellent Prayer our Lord hath taught us, that *God's Will may be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven.* There is not an Angel in Heaven, but is ready to execute the Commands, and to do the Will of God. 'Tis their *Delight*, as well as *Duty*, to perform it. Therefore the *Pſalmiſt* calls upon them to ſupply the Defects of our Service, and to make up

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in Heaven what is wanting upon Earth—— *Bleſs the Lord, ye his Angels, that excel in Strength, that do his Commandments, hearkening unto the Voice of his Word. Bleſs the Lord, all his Hoſts, ye Miniſters of his, that do his Pleaſure*——The holy Angels perform the Will of their Maker with Alacrity, Zeal, and Conſtancy; and in this Caſe they are propounded to us as Patterns; not that we can ever hope to imitate them ſo perfectly in this Life, as to be able to perform the Will of God, as they do, without any Reluctance at all. This is a Privilege and Perfection reſerv'd for Heaven. 'Tis ſufficient now, that we ſo far overcome the Averſions and Reluctances of Nature, as not to be hinder'd or diſcourag'd thereby from diſcharging our Duty, tho' but imperfectly; which is no ſmall Satisfaction at preſent, and a Pledge and Earneſt of much greater. If it be a Pleaſure to be *able to bear* the juſt Rebukes and Chaſtenings of the Lord in this Life; what muſt it be to live under a Senſe of his conſtant Approbation and Favour in the next? What muſt it be to be fully and perfectly reconciled to him, who is the beſt Friend, or ſoreſt Adverſary, and in whoſe Hands is the

Power of eternal Happineſs or Miſery? To appear as righteous and upright before him, through the Redemption that is in *Chriſt*, and Sanctification of the Spirit, as if we had never once offended him, as perfect as *Adam* in the State of Innocence? To be wholly out of the Reach of our ſpiritual Adverſary, that roaring Lion, that is here ever ſeeking to devour us: To be free likewiſe from all Danger of offending our own Conſciences, and from the very Fear of offending God; to have no more Rebukes or Chaſtenings from him, no angry Frowns, or Tokens of Diſpleaſure: To be entirely obſequious to the Divine Will, and continually Partakers of the Divine Nature; to have the Love of God ſhed abroad in our Hearts, and diffuſed through our whole Souls; to have the Light of his Countenance perpetually ſhining upon us, and the Beams of his Glory ſtriking full on our Faces: To live always in the Preſence, and under the propitious Smiles, of our all-gracious and glorious Redeemer, who has given us the moſt coſtly and convincing Teſtimony of his Love to us; who loved us, when we were his Enemies; and what then muſt his Love be, when he receives and eſteems us as Friends?

Friends? What muſt it be to be filled with *Righteouſneſs, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*, the Sanctifier and Comforter of all the elect People of God, the Repairer of our Loſſes by the Fall, the Reſtorer of lapſed Man to his primitive Integrity, the Worker of all that is good in us, that faſhions and prepares all the Veſſels of Glory, moulds and forms us by degrees into perfectly new Creatures, and makes us *meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light?* In a Word, how glorious is the Privilege, and how great will be the Happineſs, to be ſo nearly related, and ſo ſtrictly united, to the Author and End of our Beings, and the bleſſed Society of Saints and Angels, as to be all of one Heart, and of one Soul, to have one Will, and one Happineſs with God, who is the Sum and Source of all that is good, the Centre of eternal Reſt, the Fulneſs of Being and Perfection, *that filleth All in All.*

*To which moſt Holy and Perfect Being,* FATHER, SON, *and* HOLY GHOST, *Three Perſons and One* GOD, *be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour and Glory, Adoration and Thankſgiving, now and for evermore.* Amen.

# SERMON VIII.

## The Joys and Glories of the Heavenly State.

# SERMON VIII.

## The Joys and Glories of the Heavenly State.

1 Cor. ii. 9.

*Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

THE Account which the Apoſtle gives of the preſent Inviſibility of the Things of the other World, and of our preſent Incapacity to form any juſt or adequate Conception of them, is not deſign'd to damp and diſcourage us, or to hinder our Inquiries after the Nature of fu-

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ture Happineſs; but on the contrary, to inflame our Deſires, and to excite and quicken our Endeavours in the Purſuit of ſuch glorious Things, as far ſurpaſs all the preſent Objects of Senſe, and even all that 'tis poſſible for us to wiſh or imagine. And tho' the Apoſtle uſes the Words only occaſionally, or in reference to the Subject he was upon, namely, *the Crucifixion of the Lord of Glory*; yet, as they contain a general Doctrine of the higheſt Conſequence, and greateſt Importance, *viz.* the tranſcendent Excellency of that glorious Reward, which is reſerv'd in Heaven for us, and with which there is nothing in this World worthy to be compared, or ſo much as named, I propos'd to conſider them in this larger Senſe: But then, as 'tis impoſſible for us at preſent to know all the Ingredients of future Happineſs, or all the Particulars that make up the Felicity of Heaven, I mention'd four among others, that ſeem moſt ſuitable and proper to give us a true and lively Idea of the Joys and Glories of the Heavenly State. The *Firſt* is, That there will then be no Obſtruction or Oppoſition between God's Will and ours; which is the firſt and general Cauſe of all Sin and Miſery.

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The *Second* is, That there is no ſuch thing as *Pride* or *Envy* among the Inhabitants of Heaven, which are two of the greateſt Obſtructions to Happineſs here. The *Third* is, That we ſhall then *ſee God as he is*, and by ſeeing, be transform'd more and more into his Likeneſs; which will raiſe human Nature to the higheſt Degrees of Perfection 'tis capable of. And the *Fourth* and laſt Particular, is, That thoſe who are once admitted to the beatific Viſion of God, will enjoy it to all Eternity, which is the Crown and Completion of all Felicity.

'Twas only the Firſt of theſe Heads that I conſider'd in my laſt Diſcourſe. The next in Order is, That there will be no *Pride* or *Envy* among the Inhabitants of Heaven, which are two of the greateſt Obſtructions to Happineſs in this Life. But to conſider theſe a little diſtinctly——

*Firſt*, as to *Pride*; this, as the wiſe Son of *Sirach* obſerves, *was not made for Man*; and I may add, no, nor for the Angels neither; tho' 'tis more ſhameful and ſurpriſeing, in ſuch a mean and mortal Creature as Man is, than in thoſe ſpiritual and immortal Beings; not only becauſe he is by Nature

Nature and Station inferior to them, but becauſe he is ſubject to greater Corruption than the Nature of Angels is capable of. As *Pride* is irrational and abſurd in a *Creature*; ſo 'tis abominable and unaccountable in a *Sinner*, who has infinite Reaſon to be humble, and no Pretence at all for Pride, unleſs he will be proud of what is none of his own, or of what he ought to be aſham'd. But if he be ſo, he muſt expect that God will reſiſt and oppoſe him: Or, ſhould he be patient and ſilent in the Caſe, yet his own Pride will not ſuffer him to be eaſy and happy; and that becauſe he builds his Content and Happineſs upon ſomething that is quite foreign to him, I mean, upon the Judgments and Opinions of others, than which nothing can be more fickle and variable. Indeed, while the World ſeems to entertain ſomething of the ſame good Opinion of him, that he has of himſelf, the proud Man can be well enough pleaſed and ſatisfied; and it would be a Wonder, if he ſhould not. But no ſooner is this withdrawn in whole or in part; no ſooner does he meet with any real or imaginary Contempt, but his Quiet is gone, his Contentment is vaniſh'd, his Happineſs

pineſs is at an End. Nor is he only thus liable to be diſturb'd himſelf upon every Occaſion, but too often likewiſe diſturbs the Peace of others, and is ſeldom free from Broils and Contentions. This is a ſhort and plain Account of the Nature and Effects of Pride. And this being premiſed, we ſhall more readily perceive, how neceſſary it is, in order to make Heaven ſuch a Place and State of Happineſs, as 'tis repreſented, that there be no ſuch thing as *Pride* there. For if there were, it would ſoon diſturb the Peace, and deſtroy the Felicity, of thoſe calm and bliſsful Regions. So we find it was at the Beginning: For *there was War in Heaven* upon the Revolt of the fallen Angels; whoſe Fall is generally allow'd to have been occaſion'd by their *Pride*. And afterwards there could be no Peace among the Inhabitants there, till *they* were excluded from thence. But now among all the *elect Angels* and *Archangels*, *Cherubims* and *Seraphims*, *Thrones*, *Dominions*, *Principalities* and *Powers* in the Heavenly Places, there is not the leaſt Degree or Tincture of Pride to be found. In the Height of their Glory, in the Midſt of their Happineſs, in the Fulneſs of their Enjoyments,

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they are all cloath'd with *Humility:* And the more diſtinguiſhed and exalted any of theſe are, the more modeſt and lowly they appear, being duly ſenſible, that as it was not their own Hands that made them and faſhioned them at firſt; ſo neither was it their own Power or Merit that advanced them in Dignity above their Brethren. For who maketh one to differ from another, but the Original and Supreme Author and Diſpoſer of all Things; who hath placed ſome in higher and ſome in lower Stations; and diſtributed his Favours in what manner and meaſure he pleaſed, of his own mere Bounty; and doth according to the Counſel of his own Will in the Armies above, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth? *Humility* then, like *Charity, never faileth.* 'Tis the Foundation of all our Hopes in this Life, and of our Happineſs in the next. Thoſe that are moſt humble here, will be much more humble hereafter. When they come to *ſee God Face to Face*, to behold the *Felicity of his Choſen*, the bright Crowns of his Saints, the reſplendent Choir of Heaven, the glorified Humanity of the Bleſſed *Jeſus*, and the adorable Perfections of his Godhead, to be received into

into his Joys, and admitted to a View of his Royalties and Glories, there will be *no more Spirit within them*; they will be fill'd with Wonder and Amazement at the happy Change of their Condition, *ſo far beyond all that they looked for*; and not able to conceeive how ſuch worthleſs and ſinful Creatures ſhould be made Partakers of ſuch tranſcendent Felicity. If the *Pſalmiſt*, upon contemplating the Love and Condeſcenſion of God to us in this Life, could ſay, *Lord, what is Man, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man, that thou viſiteſt him?* what Words ſhall we take to expreſs our Admiration and Gratitude, when we ſee ourſelves advanced to the higheſt Pitch of Happineſs and Glory? Even the Remembrance of our Sins will then help to heighten and increaſe our Joys. We ſhall then fully underſtand what the Apoſtle means, when he ſays, *God be thanked, that ye were the Servants of Sin:* For if we had not, we could never have been ſo duly ſenſible of the Divine Goodneſs, nor ſo powerfully excited to rapturous Acts of Praiſe and Thankſgiving. For, as our Saviour obſerves, *To whom little is forgiven, the ſame loveth little.* But when we come

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to ſee with our Eyes the infinite Majeſty of him, whom we have ſo often and ſo grievouſly offended, to hear with our Ears the full Force and Extent of redeeming Love, which we have here ſometimes ſo ſhamefully ſlighted and neglected, to behold the Preſence of that Holy Spirit, whoſe kindly Motions, tender Warnings, and gracious Influences, we have either wilfully oppos'd, or too little regarded; we ſhall be perfectly aſtoniſhed to think, that Sins committed by proud inſolent Duſt and Aſhes, againſt ſuch Perſonages, ſuch Endearments, ſuch Obligations, ſuch Bowels of Mercy, Goodneſs, and Forbearance, could ever have been pardoned and forgiven; and much more, that we ourſelves, after all, ſhould be admitted to the higheſt Favours! The Thoughts of this will fill our Souls with the moſt grateful Sentiments, and ardent Love, and make our Tongues overflow with Songs of Praiſe and Hallelujahs. And no Employment in the Heavenly Choir will be more raviſhing and delightful, than that of Thankſgiving, both becauſe this will immediately be return'd with more plentiful Communications of the Divine Goodneſs, and becauſe, in recounting the Mercies of God, we ſhall more

more ſenſibly feel and enjoy them, and renew again the Deliverances which we thus acknowledge and commemorate. So much will our *preſent Sinfulneſs* contribute to the Increaſe of our *future Happineſs*, and be a Means to preſerve us ſtill in a State of Humility, and to heighten our Senſe of the Divine Mercy. For tho' God, according to the gracious Tenor of the New Covenant, has promiſed to be *merciful to our Unrighteouſneſs, and our Sins and our Iniquities to remember no more*; yet theſe are what we ourſelves ſhall never forget thro' the Days of Eternity, no more than we ſhall our *primitive Nothingneſs*, from which an Almighty Power and Goodneſs brought us forth; which we ſhall then be more ſenſible of, than we are at preſent: And from this humble Senſe of our original State (which however will not be attended with any Uneaſineſs, Shame, or Grief) we ſhall be more ſtrongly excited to make the proper Returns of Adoration and Praiſe. When we conſider *the Rock from whence we were hewn*, that State of Emptineſs and Nothingneſs from whence we were taken, and compare this with our glorified State; and reflect withal, that God ſtood in

no need of ſuch Creatures to promote his own Happineſs, or to ſet forth his Praiſes, who is always equally and infinitely happy in himſelf, and incapable of any Diminution or Increaſe; how ſhall we admire and celebrate the free Communications of his Goodneſs, and the exceeding great Riches of his infinite Liberality and Love? As this will be the happy Effect and Conſequence of an humble Senſe and Remembrance of our former Sinfulneſs and Nothingneſs: So the Memory or Diſcovery of the many great and formidable Dangers we eſcaped in our Pilgrimage thro' this World, and which here we either knew not at all, or but imperfectly, will mightily help likewiſe to increaſe our Gratitude, and to give a greater Guſt to the heavenly Enjoyment. When we ſhall hear God ſpeaking in our Ears, or whiſpering in our Hearts, *O Iſrael! thou hadſt deſtroy'd thyſelf, but in me was thy Help*; when thou haſt been ready to periſh, my merciful Hand has held thee up; *when thou paſſedſt through the Waters*, in ſuch a Seaſon of thy Life, *I have been with thee*; *and through the Rivers*, it was I that commanded them not to *overflow thee*; *when thou walkedſt through the Fire*, in

in another Stage of thy Pilgrimage, I have prevented thee from being *burnt*, and ſtopt the *Flames from kindling upon thee*; when I have ſeen thee playing fearleſly and ſecurely in the midſt of Danger, I have ſent mine Angel to warn and deliver thee; and indeed, when we ſhall come to know the Myſtery, and underſtand the Meaning, of all the more perplexing Paſſages of our Lives, of thoſe intricate Mazes and Labyrinths, that Variety of dark Providences, and croſs Accidents, thro' which we have been ſafely led by unerring Wiſdom, and free undeſerv'd Mercy, and ſee what Reaſon there was for every Winding and Turning, and for all the Changes and Chances that befel us in this mortal State, and clearly view every falſe Step we had taken, and every Danger and Diſtreſs we have eſcaped, and been deliver'd from, and all the gracious Methods of God's Providence, by which he was pleas'd to conduct and bring us to himſelf: When, I ſay, we ſhall fully, clearly, and diſtinctly ſee all this, we ſhall ſcarce know which to admire moſt, our own Folly, or the Divine Wiſdom; the Blindneſs and Perverſeneſs of our own Hearts, or God's tender Concern and Kind-

neſs towards us, in all the amazing Scenes and Revolutions of our Lives paſt. To all which we may add, that the Joys of Heaven will probably receive a farther Increaſe or Augmentation from another humbling Conſideration, that may ariſe to the Bleſſed above, from ſome real or viſionary Repreſentation of the Pains of Hell. For tho' that Place of Torments will be removed at the fartheſt Diſtance, and ſtand in the oppoſite Extreme to the Heavenly Manſions: Yet as the Devil drew a Landſhip of the Kingdoms and Glories of this World, and preſented them, in Shew and Appearance, before the Eyes of our Saviour; ſo God may cauſe, ſome way or other, the Horrors of the bottomleſs Gulph, and the Howlings of the Damn'd, to reach the Eyes and Ears of his Saints, *at certain Seaſons*, not to terrify and grieve them, but to give them a ſtronger and livelier Idea of his unutterable Mercy towards them; that ſo, by viewing the Shades of Blackneſs, and Darkneſs, and Deſpair, ſecure at the ſame Time of enjoying ſtill the preſent Scene of Light, Happineſs, and Glory; and reflecting withal, how utterly unworthy they were of the latter, and how very deſerving of the former,

former, where they might have lain for ever, if the moſt wonderful and extraordinary Mercy of God had not reſcued and deliver'd them, even becauſe he had a Favour unto them; they may be powerfully moved to adore and magnify their Heavenly Benefactor, and with all Lowlineſs of Mind, and with the higheſt Tranſports of Joy and Gratitude, offer this Tribute of Praiſe and Thankſgiving to their ever-bleſſed Redeemer——*Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our Sins in his own Blood, and made us Kings and Prieſts to God and his Father, to him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

But to proceed in our View of the Heavenly State——As there will be no *Pride* there; but the greateſt Reaſon, and the greateſt Exerciſe for Humility, a Virtue which we can never perfectly learn, till we come to ſee our own Unworthineſs and Nothingneſs in the Fulneſs and Sufficiency of God; ſo will there be no Cauſe or Ground for *Envy*, which is to be found only among little and narrow Souls. This ugly Quality has the worſt Effect and Influence of any, upon the Paſſions and Affections of the Soul.

Other Vices of the Paſſions conſiſt either in being directed to wrong Objects, or in exceeding the Bounds which God has appointed for them: As Fear and Anger, Joy and Sorrow, become ſinful or blameable, when either they are miſplaced, or immoderate and exceſſive: But *Envy* perverts the very Nature of the Paſſions, and changes and deſtroys the End and Deſign, for which they were given and implanted in us. For whereas Reaſon directs, and the Apoſtle exhorts us to *rejoice with them that do rejoice*, and to *weep with them that weep*, the Envious, on the contrary, rejoice for thoſe that weep, and weep for thoſe that rejoice; grudge and repine at what ſhould be a Pleaſure and Satisfaction, and are too often pleaſed and delighted with what ſhould excite their Condolence and Commiſeration. The ſad Effects of this Sin we have ſeen and felt ever ſince its firſt Appearance in the World. The Devil, envying the Happineſs of God's new Creature, Man, endeavour'd to draw him into the ſame Ruin, and to involve him in the ſame Miſery with himſelf: And his Attempt prov'd too ſucceſsful. We have ſeen what Deſtruction it hath wrought upon the Earth: It immediately

diately defaced the laſt beautiful Piece of the Divine Workmanſhip, the Image of God upon the Soul of Man; and reduced that ſpiritual Part of the Creation to a State of Chaos and Confuſion, not much unlike that original one, out of which this material World was framed. St. *Paul*, ſpeaking in his own Perſon, gives us a ſhort Character and Deſcription of this State: *We ourſelves alſo*, ſays he, *were ſometimes fooliſh, diſobedient, deceived, ſerving divers Luſts and Pleaſures, living in Malice and Envy, hateful and hating one another.* This is the Condition which the Envy of the Devil ſoon brought us into; and, which was the worſt Part of all, he left the *Taint* of his own Envy behind him, which is ſince become a Part of the corrupt Nature of Man, and which ſo often ſours and ſpoils all the Enjoyments of this Life, and utterly diſqualifies for the Happineſs of the next: One principal Ingredient of which is, that we ſhall be perfectly free from Envy in ourſelves, and from the fatal Effects of it in others. For where *All* are happy, there can be no Envy. Where every one has his Heart's Deſire, he can wiſh for nothing far-

ther. Now we read in the *Revelation*, that *the Saints ſhall inherit all things*; and if all things, then nothing will be wanting to them; and if nothing be wanting, the very Foundation of all Envy is taken away. For 'tis none but the *Indigent*, in ſome reſpect or other, that are ſubject to this troubleſome Paſſion. But in Heaven all are full and abound: Each enjoys a diſtinct Happineſs, and each partakes of the common Salvation. And tho' the larger Communications of Divine Bounty muſt neceſſarily cauſe a more exquiſite Delight in ſome; yet the leſſer Streams that flow to others, are as much as they are capable of receiving, and therefore muſt create in them likewiſe a full Complacency and Content. Nor are they content only with their own Lot, but rejoice in the Portion of one another. All unite in ſinging Hymns of Praiſe and Thankſgiving to him that ſitteth on the Throne, for the Bleſſedneſs conferr'd upon themſelves, and upon the whole Church Triumphant, and upon every individual Member of the ſame. And by this means they enjoy a double Felicity, both that which is peculiar to themſelves, and that which is common to all. So perfectly free

will the bleſſed Inhabitants of Heaven be from every Degree and Tincture of Envy, that as they will have no Grounds or Temptations for it, ſo neither will they have the leaſt Inclination or Tendency that way. No; that old Leaven muſt be throughly purged out, before we can hope to be receiv'd among the Saints in Light. It has been baniſh'd out of Heaven, ever ſince the Expulſion of *Satan* and his Angels, and will never more find Admittance there. And therefore we muſt learn to practiſe that great Duty of Chriſtian Charity, *which envieth not*, while we live here, if we deſire to have a Place in the Heavenly Manſions hereafter; where all is Joy, and Peace, and Love, and mutual Returns of Kindneſs and Congratulation. Where the Souls of the Saints are ſo fill'd and engag'd with the Thoughts and Contemplation of God and his Goodneſs, that nothing can divert them to meaner Proſpects; where they love God above all things, and every Fellow-Saint as themſelves: Where they utterly diſclaim all Pretences to Merit, all Thoughts of any Righteouſneſs of their own, all Complacency in their own Worth or Works, and aſcribe the Whole of what they

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are and enjoy, to mere Favour, and infinite Mercy; where they are throughly ſenſible, that *by Grace they are ſaved*, and that eternal Life is both the Gift of God the Father, and the dear Purchaſe of God the Son, and the glorious Fruit of the Sanctification of God the Holy Ghoſt: And therefore with Angels and Arch-angels they laud and magnify God's glorious Name, ſaying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory and Honour and Power; for thou haſt created all things, and for thy Pleaſure they are and were created.*

*To Him therefore,* FATHER, SON, *and* HOLY GHOST, *be aſcrib'd, in all Churches of the Saints, all Honour and Glory, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for ever.* Amen.

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# SERMON IX.

## The Joys and Glories of the Heavenly State.

# SERMON IX.

## The Joys and Glories of the Heavenly State.

1 Cor. ii. 9.

*Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

A *THIRD* principal Ingredient of future Happineſs I mention'd, and that indeed which will make up the *greateſt* Part of the Felicities of the Heavenly State, is, that we ſhall then *ſee God as he is*, and by ſeeing be transform'd, more and more, into his Likeneſs, which will raiſe human Nature to the higheſt Degrees of Perfection 'tis capable of.

St.

St. *Paul*, in another Part of this Epiſtle, tells us, that *now we ſee through a Glaſs darkly, but then Face to Face; now we know in part, but then ſhall we know even as alſo we are known.* But the laſt Words are to be taken with ſome Limitation, and may be beſt explain'd by the former. For 'tis certain, that we never can know God ſo fully and perfectly as we are known by him. But as we ſhall be permitted to *ſee him Face to Face*, or, as the Apoſtle elſewhere expreſſes it, to *behold with open Face the Glory of the Lord*, our Knowledge of him will be as extenſive and complete, as our finite Underſtandings are able to attain unto; but ſtill ſhort of an *infinite Comprehenſion*, which can belong only to an *infinite Being*. Here *we ſee through a Glaſs darkly:* We ſee God only in his Works of Creation and Providence, and in that more gracious and myſterious Work of Redemption, from whence we are able to form to ourſelves ſome little Notion of his Nature, Attributes, and Perfections: As, that he is *Eternal*; ſince nothing could have been, if there had not been ſomething that had no Beginning, becauſe no one Thing can produce or give Being to itſelf; and therefore

fore there muſt be ſome ſupreme original Cauſe, which we call *GOD*, that never was produced, or had any Beginning, and which produced all other Things; ſo that by the *Things which are ſeen*, we come to know him that is inviſible; by *the Things that are made*, we underſtand, that there is ſomething *unmade*; and by finding out the *Beginning* of theſe Things, we arrive at the Knowledge of a *beginningleſs Being*. Thus the Things of this World help us to diſcover thoſe of the other, and *temporal* Things carry us back to that which is *eternal*. We learn likewiſe, in ſome meaſure, from his Works, as well as from Scripture, that *God is a Spirit*. For every thing that is material, or compounded of Matter, is ſluggiſh and unactive; and there muſt be ſome *Firſt Mover*, to give Motion to other Things. 'Tis the Spirit of Man that is in him, that moves his Body: When that is departed, the Body is left without *Motion*, as well as without Life and Senſe. And therefore we know from ourſelves, that there is ſome ſpiritual Being in the World, that firſt put Things in Motion, and that has continued their Motion ever ſince; that gave the Sun, Moon and Stars, their Laws of Motion,

and

and ſtated Revolutions, which ſhall not be broken. Again, as every Workman is ſuppoſed to know and underſtand his own Work; ſo from hence we may learn, as well as from other Reaſons, that God has a *perfect Knowledge* of all that he has made. For, as the *Pſalmiſt* argues the Caſe from natural Reaſon——*He that planted the Ear, ſhall he not hear? He that made the Eye, ſhall not he ſee? He that teacheth Man Knowledge, doth not he underſtand? He that faſhioneth all the Hearts of Men,* muſt needs underſtand both their Thoughts and Works. That God is *Omnipotent*, and that nothing is impoſſible to him, we may eaſily infer from his Works of Creation. For what leſs than an Almighty Power could produce out of nothing this material World, and ſuch an infinite Variety of Creatures? And that they were all produced out of Nothing, is plain from hence, that every Thing which is not God, muſt have a Beginning; and whatſoever had a Beginning, was *Nothing* before it began to be. The *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* of God are alſo clearly ſeen and underſtood, by the Things which he hath made; his *Mercy* and *Compaſſion* in the Redemption of fallen Man; his *Holineſs*

or moral Perfections in the Laws which he has given us, and in the Life of the Bleſſed *Jeſus*, which was the Life of *God manifeſted in the Fleſh*. *Lo, theſe are part of his Ways*, or known here in part; *but how little a Portion is heard or ſeen of them*, in Compariſon of what does not yet appear? But in the Heavenly State we ſhall *ſee God as he is*; not barely in his Works, but in his Eſſence; not by Reflection or Contemplation only, but with our naked Eye, and with open Face; by a full View, and experimental Knowledge, of what he is in himſelf, and with reſpect to his Creatures. Our Faith will then be turn'd into Viſion. The Clouds and Darkneſs that were round about his Throne, and that intercepted our Sight of him before, will then be removed; and he will ſhine out in all the Luſtre of his glorious Godhead. His ſpiritual and inviſible Nature will be diſplay'd before the Eyes of our Underſtanding, and his viſible Glories, or majeſtick Preſence, will be made manifeſt to the Eyes of our Body. The Apoſtle indeed tells us, that *he dwelleth in the Light which no Man can approach unto, whom no Man hath ſeen, or can ſee.* If this be ſpoken in reference to the *future* as well

as preſent State, then 'tis certain that God will not appear viſible to our bodily Eyes, any otherwiſe than in his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, who is *the Brightneſs of his Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon:* To which thoſe other Words of the Apoſtle ſeem to bear ſome Alluſion; *For God, who commanded the Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs, hath ſhined in our Hearts, to give the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Face of Jeſus Chriſt:* So that, according to this Conſtruction, the *Body* of *Chriſt* will then be the *Shechinah*, or viſible Symbol, by which the Divine Preſence will manifeſt itſelf to the Inhabitants of Heaven. But if the forementioned Paſſage reſpects only this Life, and is no other than a Confirmation or Repetition of that common Aſſertion in the Old Teſtament, that *no Man can ſee God, and live*, then we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that though God be a Spirit, and, as ſuch, inviſible, yet he will, ſome way or other, exhibit himſelf to the Eyes of our *Body*, as well as of our *Mind:* And this is no more than what holy *Job* profeſs'd to believe, when he declared his Faith in the Reſurrection—*Though after my Skin Worms deſtroy this Body,*

*Body, yet in my Fleſh ſhall I ſee God; whom I ſhall ſee for myſelf, and mine Eyes ſhall behold, and not another.* And this likewiſe is what is intimated in the Words before obſerv'd——*Now we ſee through a Glaſs darkly, but then Face to Face.* And as we are aſſured, that the *whole* Body will, at the Reſurrection, be purified and ſpiritualized (for that which is *ſown a natural Body, will be raiſed a ſpiritual Body*); ſo the *Eye*, in particular, will then be ſo fortified and refined, as to be able to behold ſpiritual Objects, and ſuch as, in the preſent State, are generally inviſible. When the Servant of *Eliſha* was under great Concern, upon ſeeing an Army of *Syrians* come to ſeize his Maſter, *Eliſha* pray'd that God would open his Eyes; and when his Eyes were open'd, he *ſaw Horſes of Fire, and Chariots of Fire, round about Eliſha*; that is, a Multitude of the Heavenly Hoſt were encamp'd about him. And if the Eyes of the Body may be ſo clear'd and ſtrengthen'd, under the preſent Corruption of Nature, as to behold heavenly and angelical Beings in their proper Forms; how quick-ſighted, how exceeding ſtrong and piercing, will they be, when clear'd from the Duſt of Mortality,

and become Partners and Helpers of a glorified Soul? Now, that the ſeeing God in this manner, will have a real and wonderful Effect both upon the outward and inner Man, we may eaſily infer from the Reaſon and Nature of Things, and from two Inſtances recorded, one in the Old, and the other in the New Teſtament. The Firſt is of *Moſes*, who, after he had been ſome time in Mount *Sinai*, and talk'd there with God Face to Face, as a Man talketh with his Friend, had the Form of his Countenance ſo chang'd, that the Children of *Iſrael could not ſtedfaſtly look upon him*, for the Glory of it. The other is of St. *Stephen*, when pleading the Cauſe of *Chriſt* and *Chriſtianity* before the *Jewiſh* Sanhedrim; at which time a pleaſing and remarkable Splendor appear'd in his Countenance; *and all that ſat in the Council ſaw his Face, as it had been the Face of an Angel.* 'Twas after this indeed, that he declared, *Behold, I ſee the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man ſtanding at the Right-hand of God.* But this Viſion perhaps was vouchſafed to him more than once; or if not, then the glorious Change in his Countenance is a Proof and Inſtance of that real and ſenſible Alteration,

tion, which the *internal* Sight of God will hereafter make upon us; which is agreeable to what St. *John* has obſerv'd; for he tells us, that *when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is.* The Eyes of our Underſtanding being enlighten'd, we ſhall then ſee him in his own Divine Nature, and from ſeeing be made Partakers of it; I mean, of the *moral* Perfections of it; which will be continually exciting our Praiſe and Imitation. But as to his *eſſential* Attributes, his Eternity, Immenſity, Omnipreſence, Omnipotence, and the like, and the Myſtery of our Saviour's Incarnation and Paſſion, theſe will be the Subjects of our Contemplation, and fill our Souls with Admiration and Delight. Then perhaps we ſhall be able to underſtand in ſome meaſure, how God has enjoy'd himſelf for an Eternity paſt, though nothing indeed is *paſt* or *future* with reſpect to him; whether his Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, have, during that unmeaſurable Space, been employ'd about any external Operations, or whether any other Worlds have been found beſide the *preſent*; which is of ſo late a Date, and of ſo ſhort a Duration, in reſpect of an Eternity that is paſt:

Or ſhould we place this World farther back by Millions of Ages, it would be ſtill the ſame thing with reſpect to God, who was always infinitely *before* every the moſt diſtant Beginning that can poſſibly be ſuppoſed. How great then ſhall we judge the Fulneſs and All-ſufficiency of God to be, that wanted nothing, during ſuch numberleſs Ages without Beginning, to make himſelf happier or more perfect than he always is in himſelf? The Knowledge likewiſe of his *Immenſity* and *Omnipreſence*, which will be much greater in Heaven than we can attain to here, will fill us with the moſt humble and adoring Thoughts, and ſtrike us with a pleaſing Conſternation and Amazement. We ſhall almoſt quite loſe and forget ourſelves, and be ready to ſhrink up into our primitive Nothing, when we view God in his boundleſs Eſſence, and univerſal Preſence, as filling more Places, than can poſſibly be conceiv'd, and equally and immenſely exiſting every-where. And then, turning our Eyes inwards upon ourſelves, we ſhall be tranſported with Joy and Gratitude, to think that He, whom *the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain*, does not diſdain to dwell in our little Tabernacles; that

that He, who, according to the lofty Deſcription of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, *meaſures the Waters in the Hollow of his Hand, and metes out the Heavens with a Span, and comprehends the Duſt of the Earth in a Meaſure, and weigheth the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Balance; that counteth the Nations as a Drop of the Bucket, and leſs than nothing, and Vanity:* How, I ſay, ſhall we rejoice with Trembling and Aſtoniſhment, to ſee and perceive, that a Being of ſuch Majeſty and Immenſity does not diſdain and abhor the low Eſtate of the Children of Men, but chooſes the Souls of his Saints for the Place of his peculiar Reſidence! The Effects of his Almighty *Power* will likewiſe afford perpetual Matter of Holy Admiration, Thankſgiving, and Praiſe. For to behold all the Company in Heaven of Men and Angels round about his Throne, placed on his Right-hand and on his Left, *thouſand thouſands miniſtring unto him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſtanding before him*; and then conſider, that all theſe were rais'd by him out of Nothing, as ſo many Monuments and eternal Trophies of his Almighty Power and Goodneſs; muſt needs give us a moſt

lively and awful Senſe of the Divine Omnipotence, and ſhew us both what God has done, and what he can do. Nor ſhall we have only a clearer Apprehenſion, than we have now, of the Divine Attributes both in general and in particular, but likewiſe of that moſt ſublime and myſterious Point of Reveal'd Religion, *A Trinity in Unity, and an Unity in Trinity*; the Knowledge of which ineffable Myſtery will then deeply engage our Thoughts, and be highly grateful to our Underſtandings: And that the Knowledge of this will, in a great meaſure, be imparted to us, we can't reaſonably doubt, if we only conſider thoſe Words of our Saviour to his Diſciples——*At that Day ye ſhall know, that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you*——In which Words is implied a double and reciprocal *Unity*, of the Son with the Father, and of the Father with the Son, of *Chriſt* with his myſtical Body, and of the myſtical Body with *Chriſt*. And as the Words, *At that Day ye ſhall know*, refer to the future or heavenly State; ſo do they plainly intimate our preſent Incapacity to know this Myſtery, and that we ſhall hereafter know or be able to perceive ſomewhat

of

of the *Modus* of a Plurality of Perſons ſubſiſting in an Unity of Eſſence, and alſo of the ſpiritual Union that is betwixt *Chriſt* and his Church. But tho' theſe two Unities are here mention'd together, we muſt be careful to diſtinguiſh them, and can't but obſerve a vaſt Difference between them, as that one is from Eternity, the other commencing in Time; that one is natural and neceſſary, perfect and eſſential, the other, tho' true and real, yet partial, and dependent on the Pleaſure and Promiſe of God, and the Effect of free Bounty, Grace, and Favour. The *Modus* or Manner both of the one and the other, or how it is that we are one with *Chriſt*, and *Chriſt* with us, or how he is in the Father, and the Father in him, and both in the Spirit, and the Spirit in both, is at preſent indeed inexplicable and incomprehenſible; but will hereafter be communicated to us, and be matter not barely of Faith, but of Science or Knowledge; as may juſtly be inferred from the Promiſe of *ſeeing God as he is*, and from what *Chriſt* here ſaid to his Diſciples. Mean while our longing Deſires to know and ſearch into this great Myſtery (which is now hid from us, for the Trial and Exerciſe of our Faith)

Faith) are no obſcure Intimations, both of our arriving at this Knowledge at laſt, and of the exquiſite Pleaſure that will reſult from ſuch a Knowledge; ſince there is no reaſonable Deſire, which God has planted in our Souls in vain; and, in Heaven, we are ſure, that our largeſt Deſires will be gratified.

*Laſtly*, The great Myſtery of our Redemption by the Death and Paſſion of our Saviour *Chriſt*, which the Angels are repreſented in Scripture as not yet fully comprehending, and therefore as ſtill deſiring to look and ſearch farther into, will likewiſe ſo conſtantly excite and engage our Thoughts and Inquiries, that among all the raviſhing Objects of Heaven, we ſhall deſire and determine to know nothing more than *Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified.* Theſe are ſome of the Studies and Contemplations in the Heavenly State, that will there both employ and ſatisfy our Souls, and which are included in the Privilege we ſhall then enjoy of *ſeeing God as he is.* But that which will give the utmoſt Completion to our Happineſs, and crown all the reſt, is the full and abſolute Aſſurance, that our Enjoyment of this beatifick Viſion of God will never have an End.

Which

Which is the *Fourth* and laſt Particular I propos'd to conſider: And this is a Particular that is fitter for the Employment of our Thoughts, than of our Tongues. *Our Words* indeed, as *Job* ſpeaks, *are* here *ſwallowed up*. There is no Language to repreſent and deſcribe Eternity. This is farther than even our Thoughts can reach. *It is higher than Heaven; what canſt thou do? Deeper than Hell; what canſt thou know?* The Mind of Man, which can traverſe the Univerſe, and run to and fro, in a Moment, from one End of Heaven to another, is quite loſt and confounded, when it attempts to frame an Idea of Eternity. *Arithmetick* here can't help us; and *Numbers* are all too ſhort to expreſs an infinite Duration. *Thouſands* and *Millions*, which ſound ſo big, are but as *Units* and *Cyphers* in this reſpect. Our Meditations however on this amazing Subject will not be unprofitable and vain. What we can't fully deſcribe, we can humbly adore; and what we can't clearly comprehend, we may and ought to aſpire after. And when we come to take Poſſeſſion of an eternal Inheritance, the Thoughts of its endleſs Continuance will give us the fulleſt Delight and Satisfaction,

and

and be always raviſhing and tranſporting. And as, in the Heavenly State, there will be no End or Concluſion of the Happineſs we are once admitted to the Enjoyment of; ſo neither will there be any Interruption or Intermiſſion. There will then be no alternate Succeſſions of Day and Night, of Joy and Trouble, as there are here; no Mixture of Good and Evil, of Darkneſs and Light; no intervening Clouds to intercept the Rays of Divine Glory, to hide the Face of God, or to deprive his Saints of the Joy of his Countenance. The Happineſs prepared for them that love him, will be permanent and perpetual, and always growing and increaſing, and ſubject to no other Change or Variation, but what is ſtill for the better. The Pleaſures at God's Right-hand are inexhauſtible. The Glories of his Kingdom will ſhine forth with an infinite, never-ceaſing Luſtre. The Reſt and Satisfaction of his Saints will be unbroken and uninterrupted. Their Joys in preſent will be Earneſts and Pledges of more and greater to come. And this conſtant Succeſſion of new Delights, and new Happineſs, will be continued to them, through the numberleſs Ages of a boundleſs Eternity, without

out Moleſtation, without Interruption, and without End, which is the very Perfection of Bliſs, and the Sum and Conſummation of all Felicity.

Having thus conſider'd and explain'd the four great and principal Ingredients of future Happineſs, both in the negative and poſitive Way, that I propos'd at firſt to ſpeak to; I ſhall now endeavour to make ſome Uſe and Improvement of what has been ſaid in this and the two foregoing Diſcourſes, by a few ſhort and practical Inferences.

*Firſt* then, Since I have ſhewn, that in Heaven there will be no Repugnancy or Oppoſition between God's Will and ours, which is the firſt and general Cauſe of all the Sin and Miſery we meet with here; if we deſire to have our Lot among the Saints, and a Place in the Heavenly Manſions, we muſt take care, in the firſt Place, to remove this great Obſtacle and Hindrance to our Hopes and Happineſs: For how can we hope for Admiſſion into God's bliſsful Preſence, if our Wills are not conformable and agreeable to his, or if we cheriſh and retain any thing that is contrary to his bleſſed Nature, and to his holy Will and Pleaſure? This indeed will coſt

coſt us ſome Pains, and be irkſome at firſt, and we ſhall be forced to offer ſome Violence to ourſelves, in order to bring down our high Spirits, and reduce our ſtubborn Wills, into due Subjection to the Will of God. But after ſome Time ſpent in this neceſſary and profitable Exerciſe, the thing will become more eaſy and natural, our Wills more obſequious and pliable, and at laſt we ſhall make our Duty our Delight; eſpecially if we have reſpect, as we ought, unto the Recompence of the Reward, and often conſider the Joys and Glories that God has prepared for them that love him. This will mightily encourage us, and be a means to ſecure our Perſeverance, and help us to overcome Difficulties, and to remove all Obſtacles out of the Way, to exalt the Valleys, and level the Mountains, to make the crooked Paths ſtrait, and the rough Places ſmooth, that ſo we may at laſt *ſee the Salvation of God.*

*Secondly*, If we would inherit the Bleſſing that God deſigns for us, and be made Partakers of the Felicity of his Choſen, we muſt endeavour all we can, to fix our Hearts and Affections upon God and Goodneſs, upon Heaven and Heavenly Things; which call for

our

our utmoſt Care and Diligence, and are worthy of our beſt and moſt ardent Affections. The Things of the other World, which *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard*, we can never ſufficiently prize and admire. We can never think of them, nor love them, nor deſire them *too much*. There is no Fear or Danger of exceeding in this Caſe, as there is in the Love and Purſuit of the Things of this World. And ſince the gaining or loſing of theſe lies before us, and we have ſuch a vaſt and amazing Concern in them, we ſhould, methinks, be eaſily perſuaded to conſult our true and more laſting Intereſt and Welfare; and whatever we neglect beſide, take care that we do not neglect the One Thing needful, the Care of our immortal Souls. This is our main Buſineſs here, to provide for the longeſt Duration of our Beings, more neceſſary for us than Food or Raiment, or even than this preſent Life. We may be happy without theſe, and without living here; but we can't be happy without the Enjoyment of God. This is that ſupreme Felicity, for which we were deſign'd and created, and for which all other things are wiſely given in Exchange. And if the *actual Enjoyment* of this Felicity will

will be ſo raviſhing and delightful, certainly our *Hopes* of it, and *Meditations* upon it, muſt be ſome Pleaſure and Comfort in the mean time: And therefore one would think, there ſhould be no need to invite and exhort to the Performance of a Duty, that is a Reward to itſelf, that is both profitable and delightful. Let us not then ſuffer ourſelves any more to be cheated and deluded by Vanities here below, or to be diverted by the Cares and Pleaſures of this World, from minding thoſe of the other, which are our trueſt Intereſt, and greateſt Concern, and more than ſufficient to reward the utmoſt Pains we can take to obtain them.

*Thirdly*, Since the chiefeſt Part of our Happineſs in Heaven will conſiſt in being admitted into the Preſence of God, and *ſeeing him as he is*; this ſhould teach us to make uſe of all proper Means to fit and prepare us for the Viſion and Fruition of God. Now the beſt Means for this End is the Love of God, as 'tis intimated in the Text: For *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for them that* LOVE *him.* But we can't *love* him, unleſs

unleſs we firſt *know* him; for who can love that which is unknown? And we can't know him, without carefully peruſing that written Word, wherein he has been pleas'd to reveal himſelf to us, and often viewing him in the bleſſed *Jeſus*, who is the *expreſs Image of his Perſon*, and the brighteſt Tranſcript of that Divine Original. And 'tis our Knowledge of *him*, and Conformity to *his* Image, that is the beſt Preparation for the Knowledge, Love, and Enjoyment of God.

*Fourthly* and Laſtly; Since the Happineſs prepar'd for them that love God, is not only the moſt valuable in itſelf, but the moſt durable, both *an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*; this ſhould make us diligent in ſecuring, and fearful of neglecting, ſo great Salvation; cautious of waſting and miſ-ſpending our Time, and careful of improving every Opportunity. The precious Moments of this Life were given us, not to be conſumed in Idleneſs, Luxury, and Vanity, but to be employ'd in obtaining the immortal Crown, and the Joys of Eternity. And were we obliged to ſpend every Moment of this Life in a religious Preparation for the next, this would not be near ſo much, in Proportion, as one

Minute is to a whole Day, and one Hour to all the Days of our Life. And who is there that would refuſe a Minute's Labour, to be at Eaſe all the Day after, or to ſpend one Hour in Sorrow and Sadneſs, if he were ſure thereby to ſpend all his Life after in Joy and Gladneſs? But 'tis not our *whole* Life, that is required of us, no, nor the *greateſt* Part of it. This is indulg'd us for the Cares, and Neceſſities, and Avocations of this Life. What God requires is like the Proportion of one Day in ſeven, or the *ſeventh* Part of every Day. And ſhall we grudge this little ſcantling of our Lives for the Service of God, and the Care of our Souls? Shall we think ſo ſmall a pittance of Time is too much to be ſpared from our Diverſions and Amuſements, for the working out our Salvation, and obtaining *an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven for us?* He that can entertain ſuch a Thought, and be guilty of ſuch Neglect, declares himſelf unworthy of eternal Life; and that he has no real Deſire, nor any true Notion, of the Happineſs of the World to come. But thoſe who ſincerely deſire, and earneſtly wiſh, to be Partakers of the Joys and Glories

of

of the Heavenly State, will think no Time too long, no Labour and Pains too great, nothing too much to do and ſuffer, in order to obtain Salvation, and ſecure *an Entrance into the everlaſting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.*

*To whom, with the* FATHER, *and the* HOLY GHOST, *Three Perſons and One God, be aſcrib'd, as is moſt due, all Honour and Glory, Might, Majeſty, Obedience, and Thankſgiving, now and for evermore.* Amen.

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*The End of the* FIRST PART.

The End of the First Part.

*The Great Doctrines of* CHRISTIANITY,
*(as ſet forth in the* Faſts *and* Feaſts
*of our* CHURCH) *Conſidered and*
*Explained.*

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IN

# NINE SERMONS,

Preached at thoſe Solemn Seaſons.

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PART II.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

# SERMON I.

## On *Chriſtmas-Day.*

## God's ſending his Son into the World, the great Manifeſtation of his Love to Mankind.

1 JOHN iv. 9, 10.

*In this was manifeſted the Love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him. Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.*

IN theſe Words is contained the Sum and Subſtance of Reveal'd Religion, the moſt agreeable and moſt important Doctrine of the Goſpel, the gracious Method and Deſign of redeeming Love, the glad Tidings of Salvation to ſinful Creatures, the exceeding Greatneſs of God's Kindneſs to-

wards us in *Chriſt Jeſus*, a Kindneſs worthy of God, and worthy of all Acceptation. And tho' you know theſe Things already, and are eſtabliſh'd in the preſent Truth; yea, tho' no *Chriſtian* can be ſuppoſed to be ignorant of theſe fundamental Principles of Chriſtianity, or to be wholly unmindful of the Love of God towards him, in ſending his Son into the World, or of the Love and Condeſcenſion of the Son in taking our Nature upon him; yet, as the Knowledge of this will not be ſufficient without due Application and Conſideration, there is great Need and Occaſion of reminding you often of theſe plain and important Truths, that ſo they may warm and affect your Hearts with a lively Senſe of the Divine Mercy in our Redemption, quicken our Faith, enliven our Hope, and excite us to a ready and chearful Obedience. Now tho' all Times are, more or leſs, proper for this, yet there are ſome more peculiarly ſo; ſome ſtated Times, and particular Seaſons, that have been ſet apart by the Wiſdom of the Church in every Age, for the ſolemn Commemoration of the more ſignal Inſtances, or principal Branches, of the Divine Mercy, with reſpect to our Re-

Redemption. Such in particular is the joyful Solemnity of this holy Seaſon devoted to the Memory of our Bleſſed Saviour's myſterious Incarnation and Birth, and anſwering to the *Jews* Feaſt of *Tabernacles*, as our *Eaſter* and *Whitſunday* do to their Feaſts of *Paſſover* and *Pentecoſt*. For the Children of *Iſrael* were obliged, by the Law of *Moſes*, to leave their Habitations, and to go up to *Jeruſalem* three times in a Year, at the three great Feſtivals; and particularly to keep and obſerve the Feaſt of *Tabernacles*, by dwelling in Booths or Tents for ſeven Days together: A very proper and ſignificant Type and Emblem of the Son of God's leaving the Manſions of Heaven, and vouchſafing to *tabernacle* in our Fleſh: To which St. *John* is ſuppoſed to allude, when he ſays, *The Word was made Fleſh, and dwelt amongſt us*; that is, he condeſcended to take up his Abode and Reſidence upon Earth for ſome Time, and to pitch his Tent or *Tabernacle* among Men; that ſo he might inſtruct them in the Will of his Father, and by the Brightneſs of his Example, as well as the Excellency of his Precepts, ſhew them the Way to Heaven. As the ſame Evangeliſt afterwards obſerves;

*And we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.* Now as the *Law* in general was a *Shadow of good Things to come*; and the *Feaſt of Tabernacles* in particular ſeemed to have been deſigned, among other Reaſons, to foreſhew and prefigure the divine Condeſcenſion in this reſpect: So the annual Return of the great Feaſt of *Chriſt's* Nativity (which has from early Times been celebrated by the Church with all the Solemnities of Devotion, Joy, and Thankſgiving) calls upon us at this time to conſider and commemorate, in a more particular manner, the wonderful Love of God in ſending his Son into the World; the greateſt Teſtimony and Demonſtration that could be given of his tender Love and Good-will towards us his ſinful Creatures. For, as St. *John* aſſerts, *Herein was manifeſted the Love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him. Herein was Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.* Which Words do evidently imply, and will eaſily ſuggeſt to us, theſe four important Points of Inſtruction.

(1.) That

(1.) That it was a great Inſtance of God's Love and Goodneſs, to take any Notice at all of the loſt Race of Mankind, or to have any Thoughts of Mercy towards them, after they had ſo grievouſly ſinned and rebelled againſt him. (2.) That it was ſtill an higher Degree of Love and Mercy in him, to ſeek after them, when they were not capable of ſeeking after him; to ſhew his Love and Pity towards them, when they had no Love for him; and to purſue them with Promiſes of Mercy and Pardon, even while they were in a State of Enmity and Rebellion. (3.) This Love and Goodneſs of God will appear ſtill more illuſtrious, if we conſider the aſtoniſhing Means and Method of our Redemption, in that he ſpared not *his only begotten Son, but ſent him into the World, that we might live through him.* And (laſtly) The Love of God is farther manifeſted, or carried one Step higher yet, in that he gave his only begotten Son, not only to become Man, and live among us, but likewiſe to die for us, and *to be the Propitiation for our Sins.* And,

*Firſt*, Let us conſider, that it was a great Inſtance of God's Love and Goodneſs, to take any Notice at all of the loſt Race of

Mankind, or to have any Thoughts of Mercy towards them, after they had ſo grievouſly ſinned and rebelled againſt him.

When God created Man, he endowed him with many ſingular Powers and Prerogatives, made him but a little lower than the Angels, and Lord of the inferior Part of the Creation; gave him a Pre-eminence of Dignity, an excellent Degree of Reaſon and Underſtanding, an Integrity of Will and Affections, a Calmneſs and Serenity of Soul, that knew no Trouble, and feared no Evil; The ſenſitive Faculties all moving and acting in due Subjection and Subordination to the rational, and the rational to the divine Will and Command; together with a Power and Capacity to preſerve his Innocence, and to continue faithful to his Maker. For God ſtampt his own Image upon him, and created him in his own Likeneſs; ſo that he appeared as a viſible God in this lower World, and was likewiſe always inclined and excited to ſerve and worſhip the God of Heaven. He was alſo endued with a Principle of Life, which, by the Uſe of Means appointed for that End, would have ſecured him from Death and Diſſolution. For *God created Man to be immortal,*

*mortal, and made him to be an Image of his own Eternity*; placed him in Paradiſe, and made him Maſter of his own Happineſs; opened to him the Store-houſes of both Worlds, and enriched him with the Bleſſings of Heaven and Earth: And, as if all this had been too little for the divine Bounty to beſtow upon him, after ſome Years Trial and Probation, if he had retain'd his Integrity, God would have changed and bettered his Condition, and removed him to a Scene of more refined Joys, and higher Felicities, by tranſlating him at laſt to Heaven, and giving him Poſſeſſion of an eternal Inheritance. But now, when all this preſent Happineſs, and future Hopes, were entirely forfeited and loſt, by one fooliſh and preſumptuous Act of Diſobedience, what was there that could be expected afterwards from God? When this favourite Creature had wilfully rebelled againſt his Maker, actually incurred the Penalty threatened againſt Sin, and plunged himſelf, and his whole Poſterity, into an Abyſs of Miſery, how could he hope or ſue for Mercy? or what Grounds or Reaſon were there for any ſuch Hopes or Expectations? No Creature in Heaven or Earth could be found,

that would undertake to intercede for him, or to offer any thing in his Behalf. The Devil, who had tempted and taught our firſt Parents to tranſgreſs, would be the *firſt* to accuſe them, to aggravate their Guilt, to demand their Condemnation, and to claim them as his Property and Slaves. Not one of all the numerous Hoſts of Heaven could dare to appear for them: The holy Angels, aſtoniſhed at their prodigious Folly, ſeemed rather inclined to execute the divine Vengeance upon them, and to drive them out of Paradiſe, as they had before the Rebel-Angels out of Heaven. Nor were any Arguments of Hope or Comfort to be fetched for them, from the Conſideration of the divine Attributes and Perfections. 'Tis true, they knew that God was infinitely good, as well as infinitely juſt; and this Goodneſs of his had been abundantly manifeſted to them in their Creation, and in his immenſe Liberality towards them. But when they had ſlighted and abuſed ſuch Goodneſs, could they expect, that he would after this extend a *greater* Degree of Goodneſs to them, as *that* muſt be which could pardon ſuch Abuſe and Tranſgreſſion? They had deſtroyed themſelves,

ſelves, and who could help them? They had offended their beſt Friend, and made him their Enemy; and to whom then could they flee for Succour? They had provoked their Judge, and what could they look for but Wrath and Vengeance? Could they hope or imagine, that God would ever again love thoſe Creatures, whoſe Hearts were now eſtranged from him, whoſe whole Nature was tainted and infected with the Poiſon of Sin, and who, by a fatal Neceſſity they had brought upon themſelves, were become ſubject to Death, and Captives to Satan, expoſed to Miſery here, and to eternal Perdition hereafter? Such was the diſmal and deplorable State of Mankind after the Fall, when there was no Eye to pity them, and none to make Interceſſion for them: when, lo, on a ſudden the divine Compaſſion brake forth upon them, like the Beams of the Sun from under an Eclipſe, and diſpelled the Clouds of Melancholy and Deſpair; when infinite Wiſdom found out a Way for their Eſcape, when infinite Juſtice provided a Satisfaction for itſelf, and infinite Mercy began *firſt* to be diſplayed, at the moſt critical Seaſon, and in a manner that exceeded all that

they

they could poſſibly wiſh or imagine. This was the firſt great Inſtance of divine Goodneſs in the Work of our Redemption, that God did not utterly caſt off his ſinful Creatures, nor leave them to periſh without Remedy, like the fallen Angels. But,

*Secondly*, It was ſtill a higher Degree of Love and Mercy in him to ſeek after them, when they were not capable of ſeeking after him, and to purſue them with Promiſes of Mercy and Pardon, even while they were in a State of Enmity and Rebellion againſt him. This St. *John* expreſſes in theſe Words; *Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.* And this was *Love* indeed, to love thoſe that were ſo far from being worthy Objects of his Love, that they had deſerved and incurred his higheſt Diſpleaſure. And how great was the Goodneſs of God in this reſpect; when he did not only forbear to *puniſh* Offenders, but promiſed them *greater* Favours upon their Return to Obedience! He who was ſo highly offended and diſhonoured, was the *firſt Mover* in this Caſe; the *firſt* that offered Terms of Peace and Reconciliation; that of his *mere Mercy*, and *free Grace*, made to Sinners the Tender

of

of Salvation, and promiſed them a Redeemer in the Fulneſs of Time, that ſhould abundantly make up the Loſs they had ſuſtained thro' the Fraud and Malice of the Devil. We did not ſeek him, but he ſought us; yea, he was found of them that ſought him not, and manifeſted his Mercy to them that aſked not after him: *In his Love, and in his Pity, he redeemed us.* He *pitied* us, when there was none to help us; he *ſpared* us, when we deſerved Puniſhment; he *loved* us, when we were worthy of nothing but his Hatred; and by a Miracle of Goodneſs ſaved us from Deſtruction, when we had utterly deſtroyed ourſelves. Had God reſolved to wait for our Return to him; had he determined not to ſhew us any Mercy, before we had earneſtly ſought to him for it, we muſt all have periſhed in our Corruption. For Mankind, by the Fall, had contracted an Incapacity and Indiſpoſedneſs to Virtue and Goodneſs; and found, to their Shame and Sorrow, that the Enemy had ſtripped them quite bare, weakened and laid waſte all their noble Faculties, defaced the Image of God upon their Souls, ſpoiled them of original Righteouſneſs, and deprived them not only of their Innocence,

Innocence, but of all Goodneſs; and infuſed a quite contrary Principle or Propenſity into them, which rendered them averſe to that which is Good, and vehemently prone to Evil. So that if God had been determined not to ſtoop to Man, before Man had humbled himſelf before God, the whole Race of Mankind had been loſt for ever: *Herein then was Love, not that we loved God*, nor was it poſſible that we ſhould love him, while we were in a State of Sin and Corruption; *but that God loved us*, and, in virtue of ſuch his Love, made the firſt Tender of Mercy and Salvation to his ſinful Creatures, promiſed them a Redeemer that ſhould make up the great Breach between them, aboliſh the Enmity that then ſubſiſted, deſtroy the Works of the Devil, renew the divine Image in their Souls, and at length, by Degrees, reſtore them to their primitive Integrity and Happineſs. Now this amazing Inſtance of free Mercy and Love in God, is what we cannot be duly ſenſible of, till we come, in ſome meaſure, to partake of it. He deals with us ſtill, as he did with our firſt Parents, firſt makes us ſenſible of our wretched Condition by Nature, and then of his moſt gracious and unmerited

merited Favour. And when once we are fully convinced of this, we ſhall then ſee and bleſs God for the wondrous happy Change, thankfully aſcribe the Whole of our Redemption to his free Mercy, and be ready to ſet forth the Praiſes of him, who hath *called us out of Darkneſs into his marvellous Light*. Then we ſhall begin to *love God, becauſe he firſt loved us*, and has given us ſuch exceeding great Proofs and Demonſtrations of his Love towards us, and be careful to teſtify and confirm our Love to him, in the moſt proper and acceptable manner, by keeping his Commandments.

*Thirdly*, The Love and Goodneſs of God will appear ſtill more evident and illuſtrious, from the Conſideration of the Manner and Method of our Redemption, in that he ſpared not *his only begotten Son*, but ſent him into the World, that we might live thro' him: And *in this*, ſays St. *John*, *was the Love of God manifeſted*. It was then moſt evident and conſpicuous to all the World, moſt notorious and apparent. For nothing could more clearly or more fully demonſtrate the exceeding great Kindneſs and Love of God to us, than this Inſtance of ſending his Son into

into the World. In which Words, likewiſe, we may obſerve that the Apoſtle magnifies and illuſtrates the divine Goodneſs from two general Topicks: 1. From the Dignity of the Perſon that was ſent into the World: And, 2. From the Excellency of the End for which he was ſent. 1. The Greatneſs of God's Love to us is to be eſtimated or meaſured by the Dignity or Greatneſs of the Perſon that he ſent into the World, which was no leſs than *his only begotten Son.* In ſome Places of Scripture he is ſaid to be *given*, and here and elſewhere he is ſaid to be *ſent*; the Difference between which two Expreſſions will not be unworthy of our Obſervation. By God's then *giving* his Son for us, we are to underſtand his giving him by way of Ranſom or Exchange for Spirits in Priſons, for Souls forfeited and loſt, detained as Captives of Satan, and under the Dominion of Sin. And the Liberty of theſe immortal Souls could not afterwards be purchaſed or recovered by any ſuch corruptible Things as Silver and Gold, or by all the Treaſures of this World. No, it coſt more to redeem our Souls; and nothing would be accepted as an Equivalent in this Caſe, but

the precious Blood of the Son of God, of more Value than a Million of Worlds: *Herein* then *was manifeſted the Love of God to us*, in a moſt peculiar and diſtinguiſhing manner. And this Circumſtance of his Love, is what the ſacred Writers lay a particular Streſs and Emphaſis upon. *God ſo loved the World*, ſays St. *John*, *that he gave his only begotten Son.* And, *If God ſpared not his own Son*, ſays St. *Paul*, *but delivered him up for us all; how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?* The Apoſtle's Reaſoning in this Place is ſtrong and clear. Among all the rich Treaſures that God has to communicate to his Creatures, there is none that can be compared to his *only Son.* This was by far the greateſt Gift that God himſelf was able to beſtow. His parting therefore with him *for our ſakes*, was the moſt convincing Proof that could be given of his tender Mercy towards us, and of the earneſt Deſire he has of our Salvation. For, as our Saviour himſelf obſerves, *Greater Love hath no Man than this, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friend.* And as no Perſon, whether *divine* or *human*, has any greater Gift to beſtow than his *only begotten Son:*

*Son:* So God, by giving his Son to die for us, manifeſted his Love to us, in the moſt extraordinary and diſtinguiſhing manner. Moſt juſt therefore and forcible is the Apoſtle's Inference; he that loved us to ſuch a Degree, as to part with his only Son for our ſakes, we may be ſure will not be wanting in any leſſer Acts or Inſtances of Kindneſs, that may be proper or profitable for us: He that has already conferred upon us the *greateſt* Gift, how can we doubt of his Bounty and Liberality in *other* reſpects? *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?* But as God in theſe Places is ſaid to be *given*; ſo in the Paſſage before us, and other Places, he is ſaid to have *ſent* his Son: By which we are to know, that the Son of God came into the World as an *Ambaſſador* from Heaven, with full Power and Authority from his Father, to negotiate and eſtabliſh a Peace between God and Men. If we conſider the *Perſons to whom* he was ſent, one of *inferior* Dignity might have been thought ſufficient for the Purpoſe: But if we conſider the *End* and *Deſign* of his being ſent, nothing leſs than his *own Son*

was

was ſufficient to diſplay the Fulneſs of divine Love on the Veſſels of Mercy, or able afterwards to make full Satisfaction to divine Juſtice. God's ſending therefore *his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him*, was both the cleareſt Evidence of his Love to ſinful Men, and at the ſame time gave the moſt awful Sanction to the Meſſage that was to be delivered to them. The *Dignity* of the Perſon that was ſent, derived a *greater Authority* upon his Commiſſion, and demanded the moſt ready Attention and Compliance with the Terms that he came to offer them. But even this likewiſe was tempered with great Tenderneſs, Love and Condeſcenſion. He was not ſent in Pomp and outward Grandeur, to awe and terrify Mankind; but made his firſt Appearance in the World, in the moſt lowly and engaging manner. Had he come in the dazzling Splendor of a heavenly King, ſurrounded with the viſible Rays of the Deity, this had been too bright and ſtrong for mortal Sight, and would have forced and drove Men from him, inſtead of inviting and encouraging them to come unto him. There-

fore God was pleaſed to ſend him to us, not in a *divine*, but *human* Form; to veil his Godhead in a Tabernacle of Fleſh, and to leave the World to judge of his Perſon and Authority by the miraculous Works he ſhould perform. Accordingly our bleſſed Saviour came to us, cloathed in our Nature, being *made in the Likeneſs of Men, and found in Faſhion as a Man*; that ſo he might converſe familiarly amongſt us, that he might guide us by his Counſel, inſtruct us by his Example, and teach us the Way of God moſt perfectly. In all which the Love of God towards us was moſt clearly manifeſt, ſince he not only vouchſafed to ſend us a *Saviour*, when we had nothing in us to move or induce him to it, but *ſuch a Saviour*, as was a Partaker of our Nature, *ſuch a Saviour*, as was touched with a feeling Senſe of our Infirmities, and *was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin*. Beſides, the Love of God in this Caſe is ſtill further manifeſt, in that he *ſent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might* live *through him*. For God ſent and deſigned him as the Repreſentative of all Man-

Mankind, and he was to act in Quality of a *ſecond Adam*; ſo that whatever he did or ſuffered, in way of Duty or Obedience, was looked upon as done and ſuffered by the whole human Race. And accordingly St. *Paul* expreſly affirms, that *as by one Man's Diſobedience many were made Sinners, ſo by the Obedience of one ſhould many be made Righteous.* God deſigned Man for a *ſecond* Trial: As he had been foiled and worſted in the *firſt*, he promiſed the *Meſſiah* to undergo the *ſecond*; the Iſſue and Event of which was to be placed to our Account, provided only that we ſincerely believe it, and thankfully accept of it. This ſecond Trial our Bleſſed Saviour was ſent into the World to undergo, that ſo he might vanquiſh the Devil in the ſame Nature, that had before been vanquiſh'd by him: And accordingly we find, that in every Temptation, or Encounter with this Enemy of Souls, and with the Powers of Darkneſs, (and theſe were many, grievous, and violent) *the Captain of our Salvation* always came off victorious and triumphant. And even in his Croſs, that laſt and bloodieſt Encounter, he is ſaid to

*triumph over Principalities and Powers*, and *make a Shew of them openly*. But theſe powerful and malignant Spirits could never have been overcome by our frail and ſinful Nature, had not God ſent his Son *in the Likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh*, to deſtroy the Works, and weaken the Power of the Devil. Otherwiſe we muſt for ever have remained as Subjects and Slaves to their Dominion. For if they were an Over-match for Man in his State of Innocence, we could never hope, without Faith in our victorious Redeemer, to overcome them in this State of Degeneracy and Corruption. But now, as *Chriſt's* Obedience is, thro' Faith, accounted to us for Righteouſneſs, and the principal Means to ſecure our Title to the promiſed Reward: So his Conqueſt of our ſpiritual Enemies is likewiſe imputed to all the Faithful, and will enable them to come off Conquerors at laſt. So many are the Benefits of *Chriſt's* Incarnation and Birth, or of God's ſending his only begotten Son into the World, conſidered only with reſpect to the Dignity of his Perſon, and one End of his being ſent, namely, *that we might live through him*;

that

that is, that by the perfect Obedience of his whole Life, he might render our imperfect Obedience both acceptable and rewardable. But there is one other End of his being ſent into the World, and one other great Proof of God's Love to us, mentioned here by St. *John*, namely, that he might be capable of ſuffering and ſatisfying for us: Which is, The *Fourth* and *Laſt* Particular I propoſed to conſider: *Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins. — Wherefore when he cometh into the World, he ſaith, Sacrifice and Offering thou wouldſt not, but a Body haſt thou prepared me.* This Body was formed and conſecrated by the Holy Ghoſt, and out of the Subſtance of the Bleſſed Virgin, that being perfectly pure, and without the leaſt Stain of Sin, it might be made a holy, lively, and acceptable Sacrifice unto God; and by its Union with the divine Nature, might be of Value ſufficient to make Atonement for the Sins of the whole World. Herein then was the Love of God and of our Saviour made perfect and moſt manifeſt, in that God ſent his Son, and his

Son offered himſelf, *to be the Propitiation for our Sins*, and to make *Interceſſion for the Tranſgreſſors*. Inſtances there have been of Perſons in the World, that have ventured to die for their Friends, and many that have ſacrificed their Lives in Defence of their Prince, or for the Good of their Country. But never, ſince the World began, had it been heard, that any offered himſelf to die for his Enemies. *Peradventure for a good Man*, ſays St. *Paul*, *ſome would even dare to die: But God commendeth his Love to us, in that, while we were yet Sinners, Chriſt died for us.* Now this End of his being ſent or coming into the World, is of all others the moſt aſtoniſhing and engaging: It is what exceeds our Comprehenſion, and what gives us the moſt lively and exalted Notion of that divine Attribute of Love and Goodneſs, which ſo infinitely ſurpaſſes all that is to be found among the Creatures, as is fit only to be entertained by us with an humble Faith, and holy Admiration. It is ſuch a Miracle and Myſtery of Love, as is not to be reconciled or accounted for upon any Principles of Reaſon. For that he who is

perfect

perfect God, ſhould vouchſafe to be born into this World, that he might be capable of dying for the World; that he ſhould humble himſelf *unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs*; that he ſhould ſuffer our Puniſhment, and die for his very Enemies, is the Wonder of Angels, and will be the Wonder of all Ages. It was an aſtoniſhing Act of Kindneſs and Humility, that he condeſcended to become Man; but that he ſhould afterwards ſuffer as a Malefactor, and die for Sinners, *the Juſt for the Unjuſt, that he might bring them to God*, is the higheſt Commendation of his Love, and what we can never ſufficiently admire and praiſe him for: And therefore St. *Paul* prays for the *Epheſians*, that they *may be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the Breadth, and Length, and Depth, and Height, and to know the Love of Chriſt, which paſſeth Knowledge.* And this indeed is what *we* likewiſe ſhould endeavour to know as far as we are able, tho' we can never hope to attain to a full Knowledge of it. But the more we know and conſider it, the more humble, and the more thankful, ſhall we be; eſpecially if we re-

flect, to what worthleſs and ſinful Creatures this Exceſs of Love and Goodneſs has been extended.

Let us then, on this joyful Day of our Bleſſed Lord's Nativity, which was at firſt uſhered in by the Songs of Angels, and which they are now perhaps ſolemnizing with us in the Court of Heaven; let us, I ſay, on this holy and joyful Day, endeavour to affect our Hearts with a lively Senſe of that unſpeakable Mercy and Bleſſing, which we now commemorate; and ſo duly remember the wonderful Humiliation and Sufferings of the Son of God, in the holy Sacrament, that we may partake of the ſaving Fruits and Benefits of his Incarnation and Paſſion. Let the Conſideration of the infinite Love of God in ſending his Son into the World, excite our Gratitude and Obedience to our Maker and Redeemer, and melt us into Tenderneſs and Compaſſion towards one another: And let nothing be heard or ſeen at this bleſſed Seaſon, but Peace and Charity, Humility and Temperance, Piety, Praiſe, and Thankſgiving, Benevolence, Mercifulneſs and Liberality; that ſo the Seaſon of

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our Lord's Birth may be to us the Beginning of a new Life, and make us the Sons of God, and Heirs of a bleſſed Eternity.

*Which God, of his infinite Mercy, grant for* JESUS CHRIST's *ſake, to whom, with the* FATHER *and the* HOLY GHOST, *Three Perſons and One* GOD, *be aſcribed, in all Churches of the Saints, all Honour and Glory, Might, Majeſty, Obedience and Thankſgiving, now and for evermore.* Amen.

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SERMON

# SERMON II.

## On JANUARY 30.

## The Martyrdom of King CHARLES the First.

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On JANUARY 30.

## The Martyrdom of King CHARLES the First.

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## On *January* 30.

## The Martyrdom of King CHARLES the First.

REV. ii. latter Part of Ver. 10.

*Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.*

THERE is nothing that has conduced more to the Glory of God, and the Propagation of the Chriſtian Religion; nothing that outwardly has more tended to promote the Converſion and Salvation of Souls, to weaken the Kingdom of Darkneſs, and to inlarge the Kingdom of Light, than the exemplary Deaths of Saints and Martyrs, thoſe authentick

tick Vouchers for the Truth of Chriſtianity, which have produced more wonderful Effects, in ſome particular Caſes, than even Miracles themſelves, and have often ſucceeded, where the others have failed. Theſe are the Perſons, *who being dead, yet ſpeak* to the World, in a Language the moſt forcible and intelligible; that ſpeak both to the Ears and to the Hearts of Men, appeal to their very Senſes and Paſſions, to their Affections and Underſtandings, powerfully convincing the one, and ſweetly commanding the other. For what Man is there, that pretends to be guided by Reaſon, who can withſtand the Evidence and Teſtimony of dying Martyrs, chearfully laying down their Lives for the ſake of Truth, and for the ſake of their crucified Maſter, freely relinquiſhing all that is dear and valuable in this World, in full Aſſurance of a bliſsful Immortality in the other? And who, that has any Tenderneſs or Relentings of Nature, can behold, with dry Eyes, ſuch moving Spectacles of oppreſſed Virtue, and ſuffering Innocence? Who can view or conſider ſuch heroick Patterns of paſſive Virtue, and not be *warmed* by the Example, and inflamed with a Deſire of being

being endued with ſomething of the like Courage, Patience, and Conſtancy? Who among us, for Inſtance, could have beheld the bleſſed *Jeſus* hanging, bleeding, and dying upon the Croſs, or walking in ſolemn Proceſſion thro' the Streets of *Jeruſalem* to the Place of his Crucifixion, and not have joined with his faithful Followers in Lamentation, Weeping, and great Mourning? Or who could have obſerved his amazing Deportment, in the midſt of his mighty Sufferings, his unparallelled Meekneſs and Patience, and not have been ready, with the pious Centurion, to glorify God, ſaying, *Certainly this was a righteous Man?* And what *Engliſh* Heart, that had any the leaſt Spark of Loyalty or Humanity left, could forbear being deeply affected at the barbarous and bloody Tranſaction of this Day? Who, that had any Principle of Honour or Virtue, could behold a righteous and religious King walking, in humble Triumph, to the fatal Block, haſtening to lay hold of eternal Life, and to ſnatch the Crown of Glory, and with invincible Patience and Meekneſs, ſubmitting to the deadly Stroke; and not be ready to *acknowledge the Martyr*, to proclaim his Worth and Excellence to the World, and

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to glorify God on his Behalf? For God is to be admired and praiſed in his Saints. A Conformity to *Chriſt* in his Sufferings, is not only the *Glory of a Chriſtian*, but tends alſo to advance the *Glory of God*, as it viſibly diſplays the Triumphs of the Croſs, and the powerful Energy of divine Grace, which ſhone ſo conſpicuouſly in our great Chriſtian Hero, thro' all the progreſſive Steps of his doleful Sufferings, and made him at laſt *more than Conqueror*. And Men muſt be hardened, one would think, to a Degree of Inſenſibility, and got beyond the Power of Conviction, if, upon ſuch Occaſions, they do not ſee and confeſs, that there muſt be ſomething *Divine* and *Supernatural* in that Religion, which can inſpire frail Mortals with ſo generous a Contempt of this World, with ſuch undaunted Reſolution at the Approach of Death, in all its natural and artificial Terrors, and make them *endure the Croſs, and deſpiſe the Shame, for the Joy that is ſet before them.* And this indeed is the peculiar and diſtinguiſhing Motive of the Goſpel, which the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, the great Pattern of Patience, and Captain of our Salvation, has propounded to every Soldier and Servant of his: *Be thou faithful*

*faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life:* Which Words conſiſting of two diſtinct Branches, a Duty and a Promiſe, I ſhall briefly conſider and explain them accordingly; and then make Application of the Whole to the Caſe of the *Royal Martyr.*

Firſt, *Be thou faithful unto Death*; which Precept, tho' it concerns all Chriſtians in general, has yet a more immediate and particular reſpect to the State of Martyrdom, or to thoſe Chriſtians in particular, that ſhould be called and choſen to that bleſſed Privilege. For it is our Saviour's own Injunction to the Paſtors and People of the Church in *Smyrna*; to whom likewiſe, in the foregoing Words, he directs this Admonition and Warning: *Fear none of thoſe Things which thou ſhalt ſuffer: Behold, the Devil will caſt ſome of you into Priſon, that ye may be tried; and ye ſhall have Tribulation ten Days: Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.* The primary Intent then of theſe Words, was to encourage the Chriſtians of thoſe Days patiently and chearfully to undergo whatever Miſeries and Calamities the great Enemy of Mankind ſhould,

by the Permiſſion of Providence, bring upon the Church. Our Saviour here expects and requires of them, that they be *faithful unto Death:* Which Faithfulneſs unto Death ſignifies much the ſame as what St. *Paul* terms, *reſiſting unto Blood, ſtriving againſt Sin*; that is, a Readineſs to ſuffer any thing, even Death itſelf, rather than wilfully and preſumptuouſly to offend God, and *make Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conſcience.* When Things are brought to that Extremity by the Power and Policy of *Satan*, that *Offences muſt needs come*; when there is no way to eſcape either *Sin* or *Suffering*; when *God* or *Man* muſt be diſobliged; in ſuch a Caſe, there is no room for a Moment's Heſitation. The Injunction in the Text is plain and indiſpenſable: We muſt be *faithful unto Death.* And better it is, infinitely better, to expoſe the Body to a temporal Death, than Soul and Body both to eternal Puniſhment; better to do and ſuffer Things the moſt grating to human Nature, and the moſt diſpleaſing to ourſelves, than to incur the Diſpleaſure of an Almighty Being, who is ſure to become our Friend or our Adverſary, according as we ſhall determine our Choice, and direct

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our Courſe. When God calls Men to the bearing of the Croſs, he calls them to a State of the greateſt Trial, and of the greateſt Perfection; and therefore expects, that when ſo called, they neither unduly decline, nor unthankfully murmur at the Weight or Length of thoſe Sufferings, which are deſigned to purify their Souls, and prepare them for brighter Crowns of Glory. *Faithfulneſs unto Death* implies all that is Great and Good in a Chriſtian: A Love of Peace, and a Love of Truth; and when theſe cannot be enjoyed together, a Reſolution to part with the former, rather than renounce or give up the latter; and a conſtant Readineſs to ſuffer any thing for *Chriſt's* ſake, in Defence of the true Religion, or of any neceſſary Article of Faith, or eſſential Branch of divine Worſhip. For to be *faithful unto Death* can import no leſs than a ſteady and unbiaſſed Adherence to the great Principles and Precepts of Chriſtianity, in ſpite of all Oppoſition to the contrary; a ſtrong Faith, a vigorous and lively Hope, a juſt Contempt of earthly Things, and aſpiring after thoſe that are heavenly; a firm unſhaken Truſt in God, under the greateſt Appearances of

Disfavour and Dereliction; a cordial and universal Charity, a tried Patience and Fortitude, and a ready and chearful Submiſſion to all the Hardſhips, Preſſures, and Calamities, by which God, in his righteous Providence, may think fit to correct, try, and exerciſe his Servants. This is a ſhort and plain Account of the great comprehenſive Duty required in my Text; *Be thou faithful unto Death:* And for our Encouragement to be ſo, we have this moſt gracious Promiſe from our Bleſſed Lord; *And I will give thee a Crown of Life.* The Promiſe of a Life *after Death*, might have been ſufficient to ſuſtain the Spirits of the greateſt Sufferers. The Promiſe of an *endleſs Life*, is ſtill of greater Force, and muſt adminiſter a ſtrong Conſolation. But the Promiſe of a *Crown of Life*, has ſomething more engaging ſtill, and muſt imply the utmoſt Perfection of Life, and the Enjoyment of the moſt exquiſite Felicity that finite Natures are capable of. For as a *Crown* is an Emblem or Enſign of the greateſt temporal Honour and Happineſs; ſo when ſpoken of in reference to the other World, it denotes the higheſt Degrees of Glory, or a State of *Royal Dignity*

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in the Regions of Immortality. But it is not only a *ſuperior Excellency*, but a *more undoubted Aſſurance* of Reward, that is the peculiar and diſtinguiſhing Privilege of the *Martyrs*. They not only *believe* and *hope*, but are as abſolutely *ſure* of the *Crown of Life*, as if they were already in Poſſeſſion of it. If they continue *faithful unto Death*; if they *reſiſt unto Blood, ſtriving againſt Sin*; if they *endure unto the End*, and maintain their Courage and Integrity to the very laſt; if they *hold the Profeſſion of their Faith without wavering*, and willingly ſubmit to Death, rather than flinch from their Duty; they are then got beyond the Reach of Danger, and have nothing to fear. For, as St. *John* aſſerts, *Perfect Love caſteth out Fear*: And this is the Caſe of the *Martyrs*. No Man can give a ſtronger Proof, or greater Teſtimony of his Love to *God* and *Chriſt*, than the laying down his Life for their ſakes. In them therefore *is the Love of God perfected*: And perfect Love has nothing to fear. Other Chriſtians, even the beſt and moſt holy, when they depart out of this World, tho' endued with an humble Confidence, and well-grounded Hope of a happy Reſurrection

to eternal Life, have yet no abſolute Aſſurance; their Faith and Hope, in this reſpect, may not be altogether free from Miſgivings and Fears, leſt they may have failed in ſome Part or other of the Conditions required of them. But *Martyrdom* is a fulfilling all Conditions at once, comprehends the whole Duty of Man, and is the utmoſt Attainment, and higheſt Perfection, of a Chriſtian. Therefore he that overcometh in this great Combat, as our Lord aſſures us in the Verſe following the Text, *Shall not be hurt of the ſecond Death*; or, as 'tis afterwards expreſſed, *Over ſuch the ſecond Death hath no Power*. The Reaſon is, becauſe the *Martyrs* are more particularly entitled to the Benefit and Privilege of the *firſt Reſurrection*; and ſo will be placed out of the Reach of the *ſecond Death*, which is to follow or attend upon the *general Reſurrection*. And therefore, as *one Star differeth from another Star in Glory*; ſo theſe renowned Heroes in the Chriſtian Warfare, theſe firſt-born Sons of the Reſurrection, will be as eminently diſtinguiſhed by their Dignity and Superiority in the future State, as they were by their Patience and Sufferings in this.

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From this brief Explanation of the Words of the Text, you may pleaſe to obſerve how proper and applicable they are to the Caſe of the *Royal Martyr*; whoſe exemplary and extraordinary Behaviour in the laſt Scene of his Life, and at the Hour of Death, is ſufficient, without going further back, to juſtify us in aſſerting, that he was *faithful unto Death*. It is the *laſt Stage* that gains the Victory, and completes the *Martyr*. And in this View only do I now conſider him. Thoſe Storms and Tempeſts of State, that preceded and uſhered in this black and mournful Day, when nothing but Clouds and Darkneſs appeared, when Deſolation and Miſery marched thro' the Land in Indignation, have been often diſplayed, in lively Colours, on this ſolemn Occaſion. But we need only attend this great and good King to the Scaffold: and *there* we may behold his final and triumphant Conqueſt over all his Enemies. What he loſt in the Field of Battle, he *there* more than regained. He fought for Religion before, but there Religion ſucceſsfully fought for him, and enabled him to obtain a Crown which can never be taken from him. His *Death* at length convinced the

World, that he was *then* at leaſt upright and righteous, however cenſured or condemned before. And ſome of his fierceſt Opponents were overcome by the Sight of his laſt Sufferings, that could not be ſubdued till then either by the gentleſt Methods, or by Force of Arms. So viſibly at laſt did God appear in the Behalf of this righteous and religious Prince; when the Glories of the divine Grace ſhone forth, under the thickeſt Clouds of Adverſity, and in the very Darkneſs of the Shadow of Death; when the Strength of God was made perfect in the Weakneſs of Man, and the ſure and bright Proſpect of the mighty approaching Recompence ſupported this faithful Soldier of *Chriſt* in his laſt Conflict, and enabled him to deſpiſe Death, and to finiſh his Courſe with Joy and Triumph. For as we cannot but conclude, that he was *faithful unto Death*; ſo we have the juſteſt Grounds to believe and aſſert, that he has obtained the *Crown of Life*. His victorious Patience and Perſeverance, his ardent Piety, exemplary Charity, and other ſhining Virtues, joined with his ſuffering and dying in the Cauſe of God and Religion, have enrolled him in *the noble Army*

*of*

*of Martyrs*, and will endear his Name to lateſt Poſterity. Thus died the great and good King *Charles!* Great in Life, but glorious in Death. And his *untimely* Death is, in ſome meaſure, compenſated by the *laſting* Benefit of his Example. Tho' his *loyal Subjects at that Time* could not but deeply lament their Fate, in the Loſs of ſo excellent a Prince; and tho' *we at this Day* ought ſeriouſly and earneſtly to deplore and deprecate the Guilt of his innocent Blood, the ſhedding of which nothing but the Blood of the Son of God can expiate (and oh! may it now at length be expiated!); yet, on the other hand, it may be ſaid to our Honour and Comfort, in ſome Senſe, that we are the *only People* under Heaven that can boaſt of a *Royal Martyr*, and that have the Advantage of living under the direct Influence of ſo bright and ſhining an Example, which every Return of this Day preſents to our View.

It has been obſerved by ſome of our Hiſtorians, that the Words I have been expounding and diſcourſing upon, were the Text made choice of by the then Biſhop of *Carliſle* for this King's Coronation-Sermon.

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And it was then particularly remarked and wondered at, that the Preacher ſhould chuſe a Text that was fitter for a *Funeral Solemnity*, than for that feſtival and joyful Occaſion. But, as the Event ſhewed, the good Biſhop (whether he had any ſuch thing in View or not) was not miſtaken in his Choice. For as our Saviour ſaid of the Woman that *anointed his Head*, that *ſhe did it for his Burial*; ſo this Prelate may be ſaid, at the *Anointing* or Coronation of King *Charles the Firſt*, to have prepared a Sermon *againſt the Day of his Martyrdom*; which indeed was no other than the Day of a more glorious Coronation, when the King, for being *faithful unto Death*, obtained the Promiſe of *a Crown of Life*. But this was not the only Time, or the only Inſtance, in which the Fate of this brave ſuffering Prince was preſignified. His Death and Martyrdom were particularly and expreſly foretold by Biſhop *Andrews*, a little before he came to the Crown. And if I ſhould ſay, that this glorious Monarch was marked out by Prophecy, called and choſen to a State of Martyrdom, conducted all along by an extraordinary Providence, and raiſed up by God for a Pattern

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and Example to preſent and after Ages, of Princely Piety, and Chriſtian Fortitude, I ſhould ſay no more than what might ſtrictly be juſtified. But at preſent I ſhall only beg leave to add, that as our Bleſſed Lord did ſignally reward the Faith and Piety of the Woman before-mentioned, who had ſhewed ſo great a Reverence for his Perſon, by ſolemnly declaring, that *whereſoever the Goſpel ſhall be preached in the whole World, there ſhall alſo this that this Woman hath done be told for a Memorial of her:* So we have abundant Reaſon to wiſh and pray, that our martyr'd Sovereign, that true Follower and faithful Servant of *Chriſt*, who ſo earneſtly contended for the Faith, who ſo chearfully followed the Steps of his bleſſed Maſter, who had ſo true and tender an Affection for his People, and did ſo great an Honour to the Chriſtian Cauſe, may be *had in everlaſting Remembrance*, or, as our Church directs us to pray on this Occaſion, that *his Memory may be ever bleſſed among us*; and that *we may follow the Example of his Courage and Conſtancy, his Meekneſs, and Patience, and great Charity.* And this we ſhall be the more inclined to do, if we be careful, like

him,

him, to ſet continually before our Eyes the original Exemplar, the King of Sufferings, and great Martyr of the Church, the Bleſſed *Jeſus*; whoſe bitter Death is of that infinite Importance, and near Concern to Mankind, that the higheſt and moſt ſacred Ordinance of our holy Religion is appointed and ſet apart for our ſolemn Commemoration of it, and in order to convey to us the innumerable Benefits which flow from it. It was a ſignal and ſpecial Inſtance of Providence, and a mighty Conſolation to the *Royal Martyr*, that the Hiſtory of our Saviour's Paſſion ſhould come in courſe to be read to him on the Day of his own Death; in which he could not but diſcern ſome plain Lines of Reſemblance between his own Sufferings and thoſe of his bleſſed Redeemer; which do indeed ſurpriſingly agree in many remarkable Particulars, and are not perhaps to be parallelled by any third Inſtance. This affecting and unexpected Repreſentation of his crucified Lord, at ſo critical and awful a Juncture, when he was in the very Confines of a like violent Death, muſt needs have diſpoſed the Royal Sufferer to a more chearful Submiſſion to his rigid Fate, and enabled him, with greater

Courage

Courage and Conſtancy, to meet and encounter the laſt Enemy, under all the Circumſtances of Horror; that ſo he might approve himſelf *faithful unto Death*, and receive from the Lord's Hand a beautiful Crown; that he *might know him, and the Power of his Reſurrection, and the Fellowſhip of his Sufferings, and be made conformable unto his Death.* And ſomething of the like Support every afflicted Chriſtian may expect to find, by duly commemorating *Chriſt crucified*, eſpecially in the Way which he himſelf has preſcribed; when, beſide the Benefit of the Example, he is ſure to be endued with ghoſtly Strength, and to receive Remiſſion of Sins, and all other Benefits of his Death and Paſſion.

*Now to God the* FATHER, *God the* SON, *and God the* HOLY GHOST, *Three Perſons and One* GOD, *be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, now, and for evermore.* Amen.

SERMON

# SERMON III.

## In Lent.

## Our Saviour's Faſting and Temptation in the Wilderneſs.

# SERMON III.

## In Lent.

## Our Saviour's Faſting and Temptation in the Wilderneſs.

MATT. iv. 1, 2.

*Then was Jeſus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderneſs to be tempted of the Devil: And when he had faſted forty Days and forty Nights, he was afterward an hungred.*

AMONG the many great Inſtances of our Bleſſed Saviour's Love and Condeſcenſion, there is none that appears more wonderful and ſurpriſing, than his ſubmitting to be tempted of Satan, and to be tranſported by him from Place to Place. His other Acts of Condeſcenſion were all,

indeed, full of Mercy, and clear Demonſtrations of his ardent Zeal and Concern for the Good of Mankind: But in this there is ſomething ſo very ſingular and uncommon, that we are at a loſs how to conſider it, or to account for it. We might think he had ſufficiently debaſed himſelf, when he became Man, and ſubmitted to all the mean Circumſtances of an humble Birth. It was likewiſe an Inſtance of profound Humility, that he afterwards ſhewed to his Diſciples, when he, their Lord and Maſter, voluntarily undertook the ſervile Office of waſhing their Feet. It was alſo a great Piece of Self-denial and Submiſſion, to be content to be apprehended by thoſe, whom, as he ſhewed, he was able to confound, and ſtrike dead, with the Majeſty of his Preſence, and the Authority of his Words. And we muſt ever eſteem it as a moſt aſtoniſhing Act of Kindneſs and Condeſcenſion, when he vouchſafed to undergo the Puniſhment due to Sinners, to endure the greateſt Pain and Ignominy for their ſakes, and to *become obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs.* But ſtill, methinks, there is ſomething more peculiarly ſtrange in his being tempted of the Devil,

than

than in all this. For him, who is *God* as well as Man, to *ſuffer* and *die*, is indeed juſt Matter of Aſtoniſhment; but for *God* to be *tempted to Sin*, is a Thought that ſtartles and confounds us. It was a Thing unheard of before, for a Man to lay down his Life for his Enemies; but our Saviour went farther than this, when he freely put himſelf into the Hands of his Enemy, and truſted, as it were, his Divine Perſon for a Time in the Devil's keeping. The Devil indeed might not know or believe him at firſt to be the Son of God. But this increaſes the Wonder of our Lord's Humility, that he ſhould conceal his Divinity from him, that he might with more Freedom and Liberty offer and urge his Temptations. For it may well be preſumed, that if the Devil had really known him to be *God*, he would not have tempted him to the *Worſhip of himſelf*. But when he ſaw that he did not exert any divine Power for his own Preſervation, under the two former Temptations; he might then conclude, that he was no more than a mere Man. Upon all which Accounts, our Lord's voluntary Submiſſion in this reſpect, is the moſt aſtoniſhing Act of Humility that ever was

heard of, and has no Parallel, and never can. For any of the holieſt of the Sons of Men to be tempted of the Devil, is no more than what might be expected, as they are eſcaped from under his Dominion, and are ſtill ſubject to Sin: But for the Son of God, the Lawgiver and the Judge, the Author of all Good, and of all Virtue, to be conveyed by him from one Place to another, to be tried and tempted by the Author of Sin, the Hater and Enemy of God and Goodneſs, is what we could not have believed, or had any Notion of, if it had not been revealed to us in the Goſpel. But *therefore* is it revealed, that we might admire the Condeſcenſion, and imitate the Example: *Then was Jeſus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderneſs, to be tempted of the Devil: And when he had faſted forty Days and forty Nights, he was afterwards an hungred.* In diſcourſing on which Words I propoſe to offer, in the *Firſt* Place, only ſome general Obſervations, and ſeaſonable Inſtructions, as preparatory to ſomething more particular afterwards: and, *Secondly*, to conſider ſome of the principal Ends and Deſigns of *Chriſt's* Faſting and Temptation, and to point out how far they oblige all Chriſtians,

Chriſtians, or were intended for a Pattern to us, and ought to excite our Zeal and Imitation.

*Firſt* then, it is ſaid, that our Saviour was *led by the Spirit* into this Scene of Temptation. As he was afterwards to be anointed by the Spirit into his threefold Office of *Prophet*, *Prieſt*, and *King*; ſo now he was introduced by the ſame Spirit into a State of preparatory Exerciſe and Diſcipline, not upon his own Account, but to ſet an Example to his Followers, not as *neceſſary* to *qualify* him for, but as *proper* to *precede* the Diſcharge of his high Truſt; and that he might vanquiſh the Devil himſelf, before he undertook to caſt him out of others. And tho' he be here ſaid by St. *Matthew* to be *led*, and by St. *Mark* to be *driven*, by the Spirit into the Wilderneſs, yet we are not to conclude, that he did any way decline, or that he was forced againſt his Will into this Temptation. No, he voluntarily underwent, or ſubmitted to it, for Reaſons that ſhall hereafter be ſhewn. Therefore after his Baptiſm, and ſolemn Inauguration, by an audible Teſtimony of God the Father, and the viſible Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, the

next thing we read of in the Hiſtory of our Saviour, is this Faſting and Temptation of his in the Wilderneſs, before he entered upon the Execution of his ſolemn Office, to teach us, that we no ſooner enter into the Chriſtian Covenant by Baptiſm, or renew this Covenant at the holy Table, and thereby renounce the Devil, the World, and the Fleſh, but we are immediately engaged in open War againſt theſe ſpiritual Enemies of ours, and muſt expect, and prepare ourſelves againſt, their continual Aſſaults, and never think of laying aſide the Weapons of our Warfare, while we continue in this militant State. For tho' the Devil ſoon gave over tempting our Bleſſed Saviour, becauſe, as he himſelf tells us, *he had nothing in him*, nothing to faſten his Temptations upon; yet, ſo long as *we* live in this World, and have Matter enough within us for him to work upon, we have reaſon to be always watching and praying, leſt we enter into Temptation, leſt we be betrayed by our own treacherous Hearts, or ſurpriſed by any ſudden or violent Aſſaults of the Enemy. And farther we may obſerve, that as our Saviour was *led* by the *Spirit*, and ſo did not lead *himſelf* into this

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State of Temptation; ſo he was led into the *Wilderneſs*, a Place of Solitude and Retirement, but conſecrated by his Preſence, and by the Victory he there gained over this great Enemy of Mankind; and thereby rendered more proper and ſuitable for the Preaching of *John Baptiſt*; whoſe Severity of Life, and Auſterity of Manners, was likewiſe fitly introduced and recommended to the World, by our Saviour's miraculous Faſt in the ſame Place.

*Secondly*, I obſerve, that tho' St. *Matthew*, in the following Words, ſeems to aſſert, that the Devil did not begin his Temptations before the forty Days were *ended*; yet St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* plainly intimate, that for the *whole* forty Days he was under Temptation. To reconcile this ſeeming Difference in the Relation of this Matter, we need only ſuppoſe, what is very reaſonable to allow, that *Chriſt* was firſt tempted by Satan in a ſpiritual and inviſible manner, by evil Suggeſtions, or by his endeavouring to hinder and obſtruct him in his Devotions and Meditations, and that for the Space of forty Days and forty Nights. For it is not eaſily to be imagined, that the Devil would make ſuch open and

bold Attempts upon our Saviour all at once, without having before made uſe of ſome leſſer Trials and Experiments, in order to diſcover *whom*, or what manner of Perſon, he was that he was going to engage with. But finding that all his uſual Artifices and more ſecret Attempts this way, were utterly vain and ineffectual, he then aſſumed an human Shape, and began his Temptations in an open and viſible manner. So that the Evangeliſts only record thoſe Temptations that were audibly ſpoken and delivered by the Devil, and not thoſe which were whiſpered or ſuggeſted by him. And the Order in which the three great Temptations were offered, and the Space of Time between each of them, is what may, *Thirdly*, deſerve our Attention and Regard.

As to the Order in which they were propoſed, we read that when our Saviour *had faſted forty Days and forty Nights, he was afterwards an hungred*; and when he was an hungred, the Devil took Advantage of this Neceſſity in a barren Wilderneſs, where no Proviſion was to be had. And then it was, that is, after the Expiration of the forty Days, that he came to him and ſaid, *If thou be the Son of God, command that theſe Stones*

*be*

*be made Bread.* Our Bleſſed Lord afterwards gratified his Mother at the Marriage of *Cana* in *Galilee*, by working a Miracle at her Requeſt, to ſupply a preſent Want of Wine. And twice again after this he ſupplied the Neceſſities of thoſe that followed him into the Wilderneſs, by multiplying a few Loaves of Bread into a Quantity ſufficient to feed ſome thouſands. But he would not now gratify the Devil's Demand in a like Caſe, or do any thing at his Inſtigation, tho' it were, to outward Appearance, for his own Support and Preſervation. But, inſtead of complying, he gives him an Anſwer by a Text of Scripture taken out of *Deuteronomy*; *Man ſhall not live by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God.* Such was his entire Truſt in God, as he was Man; tho' he might, as Son of God, have ſupplied his own Neceſſities: Of both which we have a plain and full Demonſtration in what paſſed before. For he who had faſted forty Days and forty Nights, and *during* that long Abſtinence was ſupported by a Divine Power to ſuch a Degree, and in ſo wonderful a manner, as not to feel even the Cravings of Nature, or to be ſenſible of

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the very Appetite of Hunger, can never be ſuppoſed to diſtruſt the ſame Divine Power for a Supply of his Neceſſities, *when* he was hungry. And accordingly it is very reaſonably ſuppoſed by ſome, that after this firſt Temptation the Angels miniſtered unto him, and brought him a ſufficient Supply for his preſent Need. And the Devil, obſerving this, took a freſh Occaſion from hence, to begin and frame his ſecond Temptation; in order to which, he carried our Saviour thro' the Air, and ſet him upon a Pinacle of the Temple: And ſeeing the holy Angels before miniſter unto him, and knowing himſelf to be foiled and repulſed in the laſt Temptation, by the Force of a Text of Scripture, which he could not anſwer, he now makes uſe of the ſame Weapon, and takes a well-choſen Paſſage for his Purpoſe, which he artfully applies to the Occaſion, ſaying, *If thou be the Son of God, caſt thyſelf down: For it is written, He ſhall give his Angels Charge concerning thee, and in their Hands they ſhall bear thee up, leſt at any time thou daſh thy Foot againſt a Stone.* Theſe Words muſt be ſpoken and meant of ſome Perſon; and of whom more likely than the Son of God?

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The Devil therefore might think to reduce our Saviour to this Neceſſity, either to ſhew himſelf to be the Son of God, by complying with his Temptation, or to forfeit his Character as the Son of God, if he did not comply. But our Lord eaſily repelled the two-edged Force of this Temptation, by only urging another Text of Scripture; *Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God:* And ſince God cannot contradict himſelf, and one Part of Scripture is not really oppoſite to another, it is clear and evident from this plain Text, which our Saviour produced, that the Devil wreſted and miſapplied that other Paſſage from the *Pſalms*; not indeed as to the *Perſon*, but to the *Occaſion*; ſince nothing can warrant a Man's preſuming on God's Protection, in Caſes of ſuch choſen and apparent Danger, that nothing but a Miracle can ſave him from periſhing. And indeed the Devil himſelf might be ſenſible, that he who was *ſupported* in his Faſt, and *ſupplied* in his Hunger, in an extraordinary way, would likewiſe be now preſerved by ſome ſuch extraordinary means, in the midſt of the Danger he had brought him into, and deſigned to leave him in. And accordingly we find,

that

that the Devil made no Reply to what our Saviour urged, but ſhifted the Temptation, and began his next Attack at another Quarter. The two foregoing Temptations were grounded on a Suppoſition, that *Chriſt* was a *Divine* Perſon: But now, from his refuſing to work a Miracle, the Devil might conclude, that he was only ſome *extraordinary Man*; and therefore applied his next Temptation to the Appetites and Affections of human Nature, which is generally fond of the Honours, Profits, and Pleaſures of this viſible World. But here again our Lord defeated the Tempter by another plain Text of Scripture, and ſent him away with a Rebuke. And no wonder that he rebuked the *Devil* on this Occaſion, when he afterwards rebuked even St. *Peter* in the ſame Words, for but adviſing him to favour himſelf, or wiſhing him to decline the Sufferings that were coming upon him: *Be it far from thee, Lord,* ſays the Apoſtle; *this ſhall not be unto thee. But he turned, and ſaid unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an Offence unto me; for thou ſavoureſt not the Things that be of God, but thoſe that be of Men.* However, the Devil's Method and Proceeding in each Temptation

ptation was very ſubtle and remarkable. He did not tempt our Saviour to a Diſtruſt of God's Providence, but in a Caſe of urgent Neceſſity, and upon a plauſible Pretence of ſeeing a Proof of his Divinity. Upon the ſame Pretence he afterwards tempted him to the other Extreme of Preſumption; but he did not venture upon his laſt bold Attack, a Temptation to the worſt of Idolatries, the Worſhip of himſelf, before he had diſcovered, as he might imagine, that *Jeſus* was no more than a *mere Man*. It was indeed upon the ſame Preſumption that he *began* his Temptations, tho' he thought fit to preface or introduce them with theſe Words, *If thou be the Son of God*. And after the ſame manner that he aſſaulted the *Firſt Adam*, did he now aſſault the *Second*. Here indeed he took Advantage of our Lord's Neceſſity: There he tempted their Curioſity. The one he tempted to tranſgreſs a poſitive Law of God: The other only to ſatisfy the Law of Nature; which yet he refuſed to comply with, that he might the more fully evidence his Truſt and Dependence on his Father. In ſhort, he only tempted our Saviour to exert a Power which he had; whereas he tempted

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our firſt Parents to affect a Power which they had not. But behold the different Effects! *Chriſt* declares himſelf a *perfect Man*, by refuſing to manifeſt himſelf *as God*; whilſt *Adam*, by aſpiring to be as God, ſunk himſelf below the Dignity of Man.

From theſe few general Obſervations, I proceed now, in the *Second* Place, to conſider ſome of the principal Ends and Deſigns of *Chriſt's* Temptation, and to point out what was miraculous and inimitable in this Caſe, and what was intended for a Pattern to all Chriſtians, and ought to excite their Zeal and Imitation. Now the Deſign of his Faſting and Temptation could not be for thoſe ordinary Ends, which are common and proper to other Men: For he had no Corruptions of Nature to ſubdue, no Sins of Intemperance, or other Tranſgreſſions, to revenge or chaſtiſe himſelf for, no Clogs or Hindrances in the Fleſh to obſtruct the free Operations of the Soul in the Acts of Devotion and Contemplation; nor had he any occaſion to be tried or tempted, in order to become more refined or purified than he was in himſelf, being always *holy*, *harmleſs*, and *undefiled*, who *did no Sin*, neither was he capable

capable of ſinning. The uſual Ends then of Faſting and Temptation had no Place in him; nor can he be ſuppoſed to have ſubmitted to either purely upon his own Account: But might he not do this to ſet a Pattern and Example to others? His *Temptation* indeed has a plain Aſpect this way; but if he had deſigned his *Faſting* for this End, he would have ſet us a Pattern that we might have been capable of following, and not ſuch a one as is vaſtly beyond the Reach of our Imitation. There were certainly other Ends for this extraordinary Faſt, and of his entering the Liſts, at this time, with the Enemy of Mankind; and tho' theſe are not particularly mentioned in Scripture, yet there are abundant Reaſons to ſuppoſe, that the principal Ends both of his Faſting and Temptation are theſe three: (1.) That he might make an Atonement for the Tranſgreſſion of our firſt Parents in Paradiſe. (2.) That he might vanquiſh the Devil in the ſame Nature that had been vanquiſhed by him before. And, (3.) That he might give an undeniable Proof of his being the *true Meſſiah.*

*Firſt,*

*Firſt*, Our Bleſſed Saviour may very reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have ſubmitted to this wonderful Act of Debaſement and Self-denial, in order to make an Atonement for the Tranſgreſſion of our firſt Parents in Paradiſe. 'Tis very obſervable to this Purpoſe, that St. *Mark*, in the Account he gives us of our Lord's entering upon this Wilderneſs-ſtate, makes uſe of the ſame Expreſſion that the *Septuagint* uſe in the Caſe of *Adam*'s being caſt out of Paradiſe. Here it is —— *And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the Wilderneſs* *. There it is——*So he* [God] *drove out the Man* †. If we ſuppoſe the Evangeliſt, or the Holy Spirit by him, had here an Eye to the Caſe of *Adam*, the Expreſſion of *driving* or ejecting (which otherwiſe ſounds harſh and very ſtrange) appears to be highly proper and ſignificant, as denoting our Lord's voluntary Submiſſion to the like Expulſion from God, and the like Temptation from the Devil, in order to recover what was forfeited and loſt, and to make Satisfaction to infinite Juſtice for the grievous Tranſgreſſion of our firſt Parents: For their Tranſgreſſion was attended with

* ἐκβάλλει. † Gen. iii. 24. ἐξέβαλε.

ſuch

ſuch peculiar Aggravations of Guilt, as ſeemed to require a peculiar and diſtinct Expiation. Two of theſe Aggravations (to mention no more at preſent) were theſe: 1. That they ſinned in a State of Innocence, and fell, when, by their own Strength, they were capable of ſtanding. 2. That they were the Heads and Repreſentatives of all Mankind; and conſequently, that as their Guilt is devolved upon their whole Poſterity, ſo their Sin was the original Cauſe or Fountain of all the Sins that have ſince or ever ſhall be committed in the World. Upon both which Accounts the Sin of our firſt Parents became *exceeding ſinful*; and as ſuch, ſeemed to ſtand in need of a ſeparate and peculiar Atonement; which Atonement, we have Reaſon to think, was made for them, by what our Saviour ſubmitted to undergo both in the Wilderneſs and in the Garden of *Gethſemane*; tho' the *full* Atonement for *this*, as well as all other Sins, was afterwards made by the *Sacrifice of the Croſs*. As to our Saviour's *faſting forty Days and forty Nights*, this was a very proper and direct Expiation for the Guilt contracted by the ſenſual Appetite. 'Twas the *eating* of

what was *forbidden*, that was the firſt Ruin of Mankind; and 'twas our Saviour's long *Abſtinence* from what was *innocent* and *lawful*, that atoned for this Tranſgreſſion. What the *firſt Adam* loſt by *Self-indulgence*, the *ſecond Adam* now recovered by *Self-denial*. Then as to the Temptations propoſed and urged by the Devil in the Wilderneſs, theſe will be found to bear a near Reſemblance to the lying Suggeſtions of the old Serpent in Paradiſe: For that one Temptation to eat of the forbidden Fruit, implies all the three Temptations offered to our Saviour. They are much the ſame in Kind, but different in Degree. Thus our firſt Parents were tempted to gratify and pleaſe their Palate, which was only a vain and needleſs Curioſity: But our Bleſſed Saviour was tempted to ſatisfy his Hunger, which was a much more preſſing Occaſion, and therefore much harder to be reſiſted. The firſt were induced to aſpire to be as Gods; the other to ſhew himſelf as the Son of God. But *Chriſt*, by concealing *what he was*, atoned for their vain Deſire and Affectation of what *they were not*. The Devil would perſuade *Eve*, that if they did taſte of the forbidden Fruit, they ſhould not ſurely die,

die, in direct Contradiction to God's expreſs Threatening; *In the Day that thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely die.* In much the ſame manner he perverted the Word of God, in order to induce the Bleſſed *Jeſus* to caſt himſelf down headlong from a Pinacle of the Temple. But he, by chuſing to continue in the dangerous Situation the Devil had brought him into, rather than exert his own Power, or tempt God by Raſhneſs and Preſumption, made a proper Amends and Atonement for their wilful and moſt preſumptuous Offence. Laſtly, it is ſaid of the Woman, that *when ſhe ſaw that the Tree was good for Food, and that it was pleaſant to the Eyes, and a Tree to be deſired to make one wiſe, ſhe took of the Fruit thereof, and did eat.* And did not the Devil draw a Landſkip, and make, as it were, a Repreſentation of all the Kingdoms and Glories of the World, and preſent them before our Saviour, with a Promiſe of putting him in Poſſeſſion of the Whole, if he would but fall down and worſhip him? But he, rebuking the Boldneſs of the Tempter, and rejecting the deteſtable Offer with the utmoſt Abhorrence, made a ſuitable Reparation for that fatal Deception, which the Senſes of our

firſt Parents had brought upon them. Our Saviour therefore, by reſiſting and overcoming theſe ſeveral Temptations in the Wilderneſs, repaired the firſt great Breach that was made in the Divine Law, maintained and vindicated the Authority of God, that had been ſo ſhamefully deſpiſed and trampled upon, recovered the chief Territory in the Kingdom of Satan, and opened a Way for a farther Conqueſt and Triumph over him. For what he began in the Wilderneſs, he afterwards finiſhed and perfected in the Garden of *Gethſemane*. *There* he *made up* the Breach of God's poſitive Law, by a great Act of Self-denial, and by a full and perfect Obedience: And *here* he ſeemed to *atone* for the Violation of it, by his Agony, and bloody Sweat. What was loſt in the Garden of Pleaſures, could be recovered or regained only in a Garden of Sorrows; and the Guilt contracted in the one, was to be expiated and done away by the inexpreſſible Grief endured in the other. Our firſt Parents, by not believing God, and hearkening to the Suggeſtions of the Serpent, were drawn into the Commiſſion of a mortal Sin, by which their Lives were forfeited into the Hands of

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their Maker; and had he then taken the Forfeiture of them, as himſelf had threaten'd, and they had deſerv'd, there had been an utter Extinction at once of the whole Race of Mankind. But here Mercy ſeaſonably interpoſed, and ſaved them from periſhing, and gave them the comfortable Promiſe of a Redeemer. And after much the ſame manner did the Divine Mercy diſplay itſelf in the preſent Caſe. Our Bleſſed Lord having undertook to ſatisfy for this Sin of our firſt Parents, in a diſtinct and particular way, the Devil may be ſuppoſed to make a Demand of his Life, according to the Threatening of God, and the Sanction of his Law. Upon which account, as the Evangeliſt relates, *He began to be ſore amazed, and to be very heavy*; and then it was, that he poured out that doleful Complaint to his Diſciples; *My Soul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto Death.* And ſoon after, *being in an Agony*, or wreſtling with the Powers of Darkneſs and Hell, *his Sweat was, as it were, great Drops of Blood falling down to the Ground.* Nature being reduced to the laſt Extremity of ſuffering, was diſſolving itſelf in a mortal Sweat: And according to the natural

and ordinary Courſe of Things, or without an immediate Divine Succour, he muſt then have expired. But here again, as in the other Caſe, the Mercy of God ſtept in to his Relief; *and there appeared an Angel unto him from Heaven, ſtrengthening him.* To this remarkable Seaſon of Diſtreſs and Deliverance, thoſe Words of the Apoſtle ſeem more particularly applicable: *Who in the Days of his Fleſh—offered up Prayers and Supplications, with ſtrong Crying and Tears unto Him that was able to ſave him from Death; and was heard in that he feared.* He prayed then for Deliverance from Death, *and was heard in that he feared*; which Word ſignifies a *reverential* and *religious* Fear, in Oppoſition to the fearleſs Temper and bold Preſumption of *Adam*, when he diſregarded the expreſs Prohibition of God, and conſidered nothing of the diſmal Conſequences of his raſh Compliance with the Suggeſtions of *Eve* and the Serpent. But by an oppoſite Temper and Behaviour, *Chriſt* obtained Deliverance for himſelf, and made Expiation for their Preſumption. Had he died under this Agony, his Death, in this manner, might have been a ſufficient Atonement for the Sin of the firſt Man;

Man; but the great Atonement on the Croſs had then been wanting, and ſo the reſt of Mankind might have periſhed. Thus was the Breach and Violation of the prime original Law of God repaired and expiated by what *Chriſt* vouchſafed to undergo in the Wilderneſs, and in the Garden.

*Secondly*, Another great End of what he underwent in the former, or of his Faſting and Temptation, ſeems to have been, that he might vanquiſh the Devil in that Nature, which had been ſo ſhamefully vanquiſhed by him: And that with reſpect to the ſame Circumſtances of Advantage or Diſadvantage. The Devil envying the Happineſs of God's new Creatures, and ſucceeding too well in his firſt Temptation of them, and having by that means drawn them off from their Allegiance to their Maker, and reduced them under his own Dominion and Power, he afterwards claimed them, as it were, by Right of Conqueſt, as his proper Subjects and Slaves. To recover their Freedom, and deliver them from this miſerable Bondage and Slavery, God was pleaſed to allow Man a ſecond Trial in the Perſon of our Saviour *Chriſt*, who was to enter the Liſts with Satan, to be tried

and tempted by him, in much the ſame manner as our firſt Parents were, but in greater Inſtances, and to a higher Degree. And the Iſſue and Event of this Trial was to be placed to their Account. But, that it might not appear to be too unequal a Match, or different, in the main, from the former Trial, our Saviour was to wave his Prerogative, and to ſuſpend his Power, during the whole Time of the Temptation; that is, he was not to exert or diſcover his Divinity, neither to act nor appear as the Son of God, but only as *a perfect and upright Man*, ſuch as *Adam* was, when he came out of the Hands of his Maker. And this brought the Trial upon ſomething of the ſame Footing that it was at the Beginning, or in Man's State of Innocence. And could the Devil have prevailed now this *ſecond* Time, as he did the *firſt*, he had triumphed for ever over the whole human Race. * But the victorious Faith

* I have obſerved in other Places, that *Chriſt*, in his human Nature, was not only ſinleſs, but incapable of ſinning, which may be thought, at firſt Sight, to overthrow what I have here advanced; ſince this may ſeem to render the Trial between the Tempter and the Tempted not only vaſtly unequal, but unneceſſary and vain. But at preſent I do not apprehend, myſelf, any ſuch Conſequence: Or however that be, I am ſtill for

Faith and Truſt, Humility and Patience, of the Man *Chriſt Jeſus*, diſarmed and defeated

for maintaining the former Poſition. For it is not, I think, conſonant to Piety or Reaſon, to imagine that the eternal *Logos* would aſſume a Body and Soul, that might afterwards be *anyway* capable of ſinning; or that that which was conceived of the *Holy Ghoſt*, *could* be ſubject to the Illuſions of the *impure Spirit*. The Devil indeed might be apt to conclude from his own Experience, that it was not poſſible for *any Creature* to be formed in ſuch a manner, or to be made *impeccable*; and therefore he had Liberty to tempt and try our Saviour in ſome very ſevere Inſtances. And his *Impeccability* could not be known, but from the Iſſue of this Trial: During which I ſuppoſe a *Suſpenſion* of all Succour from the Deity: And this brought the Trial as near to a Parity of Circumſtances with that of our firſt Parents, as the Nature of Things would allow. That there was a *temporary Suſpenſion* of Succour from the Deity in *other* Caſes, is granted or ſuppoſed by moſt Divines: And without this Suppoſition, I do not ſee how we can account for his Agony, and bloody Sweat, or what Occaſion there was for an Angel to come and ſtrengthen him, if he had then been fully ſupported by his own Divinity. And there ſeem to be as ſtrong Reaſons for ſuppoſing ſuch a Suſpenſion, while he was under Temptation from the Devil, as in the Garden, and on the Croſs, that ſo he might appear and act only as Man, and vanquiſh the Devil in that Nature that had been vanquiſhed by him in a like Conteſt. One End, among others, of theſe three Suſpenſions or Derelictions, was plainly this——That he might be under the full Force of Temptation, have a full View of the horrid Nature, and a moſt piercing Senſe of the bitter Wages, of Sin; which View and Senſe were both punitive and expiatory, enhanced the Value of his Sufferings and Submiſſion, and rendered them the more perfect and meritorious. 'Tis true, he was without Sin, and incapable of ſinning; but this is ſo far from leſſening the Glory of his Undertaking, that, on this very Account, his condeſcending to be tempted to Sin, appears the more wonderful and ſurpriſing.

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the Tempter; and thereby not only recovered what had been loſt, but ſecured, in a great meaſure, our preſent Standing, and rendered us capable of obtaining at laſt a complete Deliverance. Thus was the Serpent's Head bruiſed, that had contrived and wrought ſuch Miſchief to Mankind; and a glorious Victory gained over him in the ſame Nature, that had received ſuch a deadly Wound from him. So much do we ſtand indebted to our Lord's wonderful Love and Condeſcenſion, in ſubmitting, for our ſakes, to this Trial and Combat with the great Enemy of God and Men.

*To Him therefore, with the* FATHER *and the* HOLY GHOST, *be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Power, Dominion and Praiſe, now and for evermore.* Amen.

SERMON

# SERMON IV.

## In Lent.

## Our Saviour's Faſting and Temptation in the Wilderneſs.

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MATT. iv. 1, 2.

*Then was Jeſus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderneſs to be tempted of the Devil: And when he had faſted forty Days and forty Nights, he was afterward an hungred.*

IN a late Diſcourſe on theſe Words, I obſerved, that the Deſign of our Saviour's Faſt could not be for thoſe ordinary Ends which are common and proper to other Men. For he had no Corruptions of Nature to ſubdue, no Sins of Intemperance or other Tranſgreſſions to revenge or chaſtiſe himſelf

himſelf for, no Clogs or Hindrances in the Fleſh to obſtruct the free Operations of the Soul in the Acts of Devotion and Contemplation. Nor had he any Occaſion to be tried or tempted, in order to become more refined or purified, than he was in himſelf, being always *holy, harmleſs, and undefiled, who did no Sin*, neither was capable of ſinning. The uſual Ends then of Faſting had no Place in him, nor can he be ſuppoſed to have ſubmitted to it, purely on his own Account. But might he not do this to ſet a Pattern and Example to others? His *Temptation* indeed has a plain Aſpect this way; but if he had deſigned his *Faſting* for this End, he would have ſet us a Pattern that we might have been capable of following, and not ſuch a one as is vaſtly beyond the Reach of our Imitation. When he condeſcended to waſh his Diſciples Feet, tho' this was an amazing Act of Humility *in him*, yet it was no more than what they themſelves were *able* to perform; and therefore he tells them, *I have given you an Example, that ye ſhould do as I have done unto you:* And that this might not be thought a Direction proper only for his Apoſtles, he elſewhere propounds himſelf

himſelf as a Pattern of Humility to all Chriſtians; *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart.* But no-where in the Goſpel does he recommend his Faſting forty Days to their Imitation. In his divine Sermon on the Mount, and in his Diſcourſe with the Phariſees, he ſpeaks of the Duty of Faſting in general, points out the proper Seaſon for obſerving it, and gives ſome neceſſary Directions about it. But neither himſelf, nor any of his Apoſtles, do any-where in the leaſt intimate, that his Faſting in the Wilderneſs was undertaken or intended for the Imitation of Chriſtians. There were other Ends for this extraordinary Faſt, and for his entering into a formal Engagement at this Time with the Enemy of Mankind. And tho' theſe are not particularly mentioned in Scripture, yet there are abundant Reaſons to ſuppoſe, that the principal Ends both of his Faſting and Temptation are theſe three: (1.) That he might make a diſtinct Atonement for the Tranſgreſſion of our firſt Parents in Paradiſe. (2.) That he might vanquiſh the Devil in the ſame Nature that had been vanquiſhed by him, in ſomething of a like Conteſt. And, (3.) That he might give

give an undeniable Proof of his being the *true Meſſiah*. Now theſe are great and important Ends, that will help to give us clearer Apprehenſions of the Juſtice of God in this extraordinary Diſpenſation, and of the Love and Condeſcenſion of our Bleſſed Saviour in this wonderful Inſtance of Self-denial.

The two firſt of theſe I conſidered in my laſt Diſcourſe, and ſhall now proceed to offer ſome Reaſons and Arguments in Proof of the laſt; which is, that our Lord might give a plain and undeniable Evidence and Demonſtration of his being the *true Meſſiah*.

That the Scripture might be fulfilled, it was neceſſary for *Chriſt* to be like unto *Moſes*, the great Lawgiver of the *Jews*, in Character, in Office, and in the Power of working Miracles. But *Moſes*, before he received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount *Sinai*, *abode* there *forty Days and forty Nights, and neither did eat Bread, nor drink Water*. And had not our Saviour done the ſame, before he entered upon his Miniſtry, and preached the Goſpel, the *Jews* might have objected, that he was neither equal nor *like* unto *Moſes*. We find them ready on all Occaſions to magnify the Authority of their

their own Legiſlator. *We know*, ſay they, *that God ſpake unto Moſes; but as for this Man, we know not whence he is.* Had our Saviour then come ſhort of *Moſes* in any one Point, eſpecially in ſo remarkable a Caſe as that of Faſting forty Days and forty Nights, the *Jews* might have had ſome little Pretence for adhering ſo ſtiffly, as they did, to the *Moſaick* Inſtitutions, in Oppoſition to all the ſaving Doctrines that were taught, and all the miraculous Works that were performed by *Chriſt*. But our Lord, by his Faſt in the Wilderneſs, obviated this material Objection, and opened thereby a Way to the *Jews*, for their more ready Reception of his Goſpel. By continuing his Faſt for the ſame Space of Time, he ſhewed himſelf to be at leaſt *equal* to *Moſes*, and by performing other miraculous Works, both more and greater than ever *Moſes* did, particularly by raiſing the Dead, and riſing himſelf from the Grave, he proved his *ſuperior* Authority, and declared himſelf the Son of God with Power. So proper and neceſſary was *Chriſt's* extraordinary Faſt to remove all Prejudice and Obſtacles out of the Way, to convince the World of his Divine Miſſion and Authority,

and either to ſatisfy or to ſilence the *Jews*. Nor was it of leſs Uſe and Advantage, with reſpect to *us Chriſtians*, as it tends to confirm us the more in the Belief of his Divine Nature, and of his being the *true Meſſiah*; ſince no Perſon *merely human* could uſe ſo long and total an Abſtinence without a Divine or Supernatural Aſſiſtance; and we cannot ſuppoſe that any ſuch Divine or Supernatural Aſſiſtance would have been given him, if he had pretended to *be* what he was *not in Reality*; that is, if he had not been the *true Meſſiah*, or Saviour of the World; ſince God can never be ſuppoſed to ſet the Broad Seal of Heaven, which is the Teſtimony of Miracles, to countenance and confirm a mere Pretence or Impoſture. His Power, therefore, to faſt for ſo long a Time, and his being ſupported all that while without ſecond Means, is a plain and undeniable Proof of his being at leaſt commiſſioned and authorized by God: For no Man could do ſuch Miracles, except God were with him. By living therefore the Space of forty Days without any of thoſe natural Means, that are ordinarily neceſſary for the Support of Life, he proved his own Authority, and the Au-

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thority of the Scriptures, opened, as it were, his Commiſſion for what he was afterwards to deliver to the World, and confirmed the Truth of what he then aſſerted in Anſwer to the Devil's Temptation, that *Man doth not live by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God.*

Thus have I endeavoured to make it appear *probable*, at leaſt, that ſome of the principal Ends of our Saviour's Faſting in the Wilderneſs, were theſe: 1. That he might make a diſtinct and particular Atonement for the great and complicated Tranſgreſſion of our firſt Parents in Paradiſe: 2. That he might vanquiſh the Devil in that Nature, which had been ſo ſhamefully vanquiſhed by him before, in ſomewhat of a like Caſe: And, 3. That he might ſhew himſelf *like unto Moſes*, and give an undeniable Proof of his being the *true Meſſiah.*

If it ſhould be inquired now, *why* he faſted juſt forty Days, and no more nor no leſs, the general Anſwer is, becauſe *Moſes*, who was in this, as well as other reſpects, a Type and Figure of the *Meſſiah*, faſted the ſame Number of Days. If it be farther inquired, why *Moſes* continued his Faſt ſo long

and no longer, I need only ſay, that the Reaſons of the Divine Counſels and Appointments are, for the moſt part, unſearchable, and paſt finding out, unleſs God be pleaſed to leave ſome Traces and Footſteps of them in the Circumſtances that attend them, or in other Inſtances that are parallel to them. And ſome ſuch, perhaps, we may diſcover in the preſent Caſe. 'Tis certain, that there is ſome great Myſtery in the Number *Forty*, whether it relate to the larger or the ſhorter Duration, to Days or Years. As *Moſes*, before the Delivery of the Ten Commandments to the Children of *Iſrael*, written with the Finger of God on two Tables of Stone, *abode in the Mount forty Days and forty Nights, and neither did eat Bread, nor drink Water:* So *Elias* afterwards faſted the ſame Number of Days, when he was about to reſtore the true Religion in the Days of King *Ahab*. The Rain that cauſed the Flood, continued likewiſe forty Days. And *Ezekiel*, as a Type, was commanded to bear the Iniquity of the Houſe of *Judah* forty Days, by lying ſo long on his right Side. Forty Days were allowed the *Ninevites* for Repentance, according to the preaching of

*Jonah:*

*Jonah:* And forty Days were ſpent by the Spies in ſearching out the Land of *Canaan.* And, to mention no more, it was juſt forty Years that the Children of *Iſrael* continued in the Wilderneſs, from the Time of their coming out of *Egypt* to their Entrance upon the Promiſed Land: All which muſt have ſome particular Meaning or Signification. And it is not unlikely, but that ſome Reſpect herein is had to the Time of the *firſt original* Tranſgreſſion in *Eden*; of which there ſeems to be ſome Intimation in one or two of the Inſtances before-mentioned, as will be ſhewn hereafter. At preſent I obſerve, that we cannot well ſuppoſe, if our firſt Parents had continued in a State of Innocence, that God would have ſuffered them to lie continually expoſed to the Temptations and Aſſaults of the Devil. No; if they had maintained their Integrity at that Time, when they were tempted, they might never have ſeen or heard any more of the Serpent. For there are not wanting Grounds to believe, that God gave them an appointed Time for Trial, and that if during this Time they had ſtood their Ground, and continued faithful, he would ever after have freed them from the

Snares and evil Suggeſtions of Satan. Now if we ſuppoſe that this State of Probation was limited by God to the Term of forty Days, there will then appear an evident and ſatisfactory Reaſon for God's requiring the ſame Number of Days and Years, in the ſeveral Inſtances of Penance and Probation before-mentioned, and particularly for our Saviour's continuing ſo long in a State of Trial, Abſtinence, and Diſcipline. One End and Deſign of *Moſes*'s Abſence from the People, or abiding in the Mount forty Days and forty Nights, was plainly to *prove* them, and to ſee what they would do when left to themſelves. And their Fall at this Time might be permitted and intended by God, as a freſh Memorial, and lively Repreſentation of the great Fall of our firſt Parents in Paradiſe. In both Caſes there were much the ſame Circumſtances of God's appearing and ſpeaking to them, of his ſevere and awful Injunctions, threatening to puniſh the Diſobedience of the one with certain Death, and to viſit the Idolatry of the other to the third and fourth Generation. And as nothing could have ſaved our firſt Parents from immediate Deſtruction, but the Interpoſition

or

or Mediation of the Son of God; nor that neither, if he had not offered to make an Atonement for their Sin, in the Fulneſs of Time: So the Anger of the Lord was waxen ſo hot againſt the *Iſraelites*, that he would have conſumed them, as in a Moment, had not *Moſes* his Choſen interceded for them; nor would *his* Interceſſion avail for the ſparing of their Lives, or for the Delivery of the two Tables of the Covenant, if he had not ſubmitted a *ſecond time*, to abide in the Mount forty Days and forty Nights, without eating Bread, or drinking Water. And as there is ſo great an Analogy or Reſemblance between the Sin of the *Iſraelites* at *Sinai*, and that of our firſt Parents in Paradiſe, in ſo many remarkable Circumſtances, we may well ſuppoſe that there was little or no Difference between them in the Circumſtance of *Time*; but that forty Days were allowed to each for their Trial and Probation. And for the Failure of both in thoſe two trying Seaſons, the Bleſſed *Jeſus* might undertake, before he entered upon the Exerciſe of his Miniſtry, to make an Expiation, by ſubmitting to the like Term of forty Days Faſting and Temptation. In which, it is very obſervable,

that as the firſt Temptation has a plain and particular reſpect to the Sin of *Adam* and *Eve*, in eating what was forbidden; ſo the laſt has a direct reference to the Sin of the Children of *Iſrael* in worſhipping the Golden Calf. And it is farther to be noted, that our Lord in his Anſwer, urges the ſame Precept, which they had ſo ſhamefully neglected, and ſo notoriouſly tranſgreſſed; *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve*; thus at the ſame time reproving their Guilt, and making Atonement for the ſame. And as this laſt Temptation was offered him upon an exceeding high Mountain; ſo the Sin of the *Iſraelites* was committed near the Mount of God, or while *Moſes* was with God upon Mount *Sinai*. I ſhall only farther obſerve, that the Sins both of the firſt Man, and of God's peculiar People, being committed *before* the Days of their Probation were expired, the *whole* Term of that Probation was blackened and obſcured, and all the Days became evil and unholy, as well thoſe that *preceded*, as thoſe that *followed* their Tranſgreſſion. And accordingly in the Puniſhment and Expiation both for the one and the other, we find, there was one continued

tinued Scene of Darkneſs, Suffering and Sorrow. For the Rain, which cauſed the Flood, continued forty Days without ceaſing: And our Bleſſed Saviour continued the ſame Number of Days in the Wilderneſs, being all the while without Suſtenance, and under Temptation. And, laſtly, when he made the great Atonement on the Croſs for theſe as well as all other Sins, the Providence of God ſeemed even then to have reſpect to this myſterious Number of *Forty*, by ſuffering his Bleſſed Son to continue on the Croſs, and in the Grave, that is, in a dying Condition, and in the State of the Dead, for the Space of *forty Hours*, as it is generally ſuppoſed.

Having thus endeavoured to aſſign ſome probable Reaſons for the particular Time or Duration of our Saviour's Faſting and Temptation; and having likewiſe pointed out ſome of the principal Ends of his great Condeſcenſion in this reſpect, I ſhall now conclude with a few brief Reflections or Obſervations upon what has been ſaid.

*Firſt*, If we conſider Things as we ought, we cannot but admire and praiſe the wonderful Love and Condeſcenſion of our Bleſſed Saviour in this remarkable Paſſage of his Life;

Life; that he, who is the living Bread that came down from Heaven to give Life unto the World, ſhould, after he had vouchſafed to become Fleſh, and to be cloathed with Humanity, deny himſelf the innocent and neceſſary Refreſhments of Nature, for ſo conſiderable a Space of Time, in order to pacify the Anger, and ſatisfy the Juſtice of his Father, for ſome of the more grievous Offences of Mankind, and particularly for the Sins of his own People. Nor was this the only Time, in which he practiſed ſuch Self-denial for the Good of others. His Zeal and Concern for the Honour of God, and the Salvation of Men, was always ſo great and ardent, that whenever proper Opportunities offered, he would ſubmit to any Inconveniencies, and poſtpone the moſt neceſſary Concerns of this Life, in order to carry on the great Affairs of the next. When he was going to *Samaria*, and was tired with his Journey, and had ſent his Diſciples into the City to buy ſome Proviſion, and was deſired by them to make uſe of what they had brought, he choſe rather to continue his religious Conference with the *Samaritan* Woman, at the ſame time giving this Anſwer

to his Diſciples; *My Meat is to do the Will of him that ſent me, and to finiſh his Work.* And if *he* was often content to deny himſelf not only the *Conveniencies*, but even the *Neceſſaries* of Life for our ſakes; ſurely, it is but right and meet that we ſhould ſometimes practiſe ſuch Self-denial for our own good, and upon our own account. Tho' we are not to keep this ſolemn Seaſon of *Lent* in *Imitation* of *Chriſt's* Faſt, which was *miraculous*, and as ſuch inimitable by us, yet we may and ought to do it in a pious and grateful Remembrance of what he was pleaſed to ſubmit to for our ſakes. Thus he died and roſe again for us; and tho' we cannot die the ſame Death that he did, or hope to riſe again the third Day, yet we are commanded to do ſomething in Conformity to both; that is, to die unto Sin, and to riſe again unto Newneſs of Life. The Children of *Iſrael's* ſojourning in the Wilderneſs forty Years, was in order to fit and prepare them for the Enjoyment of the Land of *Canaan*. In like manner, we may fitly conſider the forty Days in *Lent* as our Wilderneſs-State, and the *Eaſter* following as an Entrance upon a new Scene of Spiritual Joys, and Heavenly Delights;

Delights; and conſequently the more devoutly and religiouſly we obſerve the forty Days before, the greater Reaſon ſhall we have, and better diſpoſed ſhall we be, to rejoice and praiſe God at that bleſſed Seaſon, for the manifold and mighty Benefits we ſhall then commemorate.

*Secondly*, As our Bleſſed Saviour was pleaſed to ſubmit to a State of Trial, Combat, and Diſcipline, that he might make up the great Breach in God's poſitive and moral Law, that had been made by thoſe two great Tranſgreſſions, in the Garden of *Eden*, and at Mount *Sinai*: So every Chriſtian, before he leaves this World, muſt expect to meet with ſomething of the like probationary Diſcipline; which to ſome is longer, and to ſome ſhorter, to ſome towards the Beginning, to others in the Middle, and to others again at the Decline of their Days. Indeed the whole Life of a Chriſtian is no other than one continued Scene of Trial and Probation. But then there are ſome particular Stages of Life, in which he will find himſelf viſited and tried more than ordinary. The good Angels themſelves are, not without Reaſon, ſuppoſed by ſome to have been for ſome Time in a State

of

of Probation, before they were either confirmed in Holineſs, or admitted to the Enjoyment of the higheſt Happineſs. During which Time of Probation, ſome of them, and thoſe, as the Scripture intimates, no leſs than a third Part of them revolted and fell, and upon their Fall left their own Habitation. And if Angels, under Probation, kept not their firſt Eſtate, and *Adam* in Paradiſe ſo ſoon fell from Innocence; who is there among all the Sons of Men, that can promiſe himſelf Security, or be ſo vain as to imagine that his Virtue is above the Reach of Danger? *Let him therefore that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.*

*Thirdly* and laſtly; That this ſolemn Seaſon may be rightly and uſefully employed, I cannot but recommend at this Time particularly, the great Duty of reading and ſearching the Scriptures, and not only of ſearching them, but likewiſe of endeavouring to treaſure up in the Mind and Memory ſuch Portions and Paſſages of them, as may enable us to reſiſt and withſtand the Temptations of the Devil, and be of ready Uſe and Service to us in our future Conduct. This is a Chriſtian's Armour, or Part of that *Armour of God*

*God* St. *Paul* mentions. For *the Word of God*, as he there affirms, is *the Sword of the Spirit*, by which we may not only defend ourſelves, but wound the Enemy. And there is nothing which the Devil dreads more, ever ſince his Defeat in the Wilderneſs by our Saviour, than the *Word of God*. Let us then arm ourſelves with this neceſſary Weapon, without which we ſhall become an eaſy Prey and Captive to Satan: And let us endeavour to attain ſuch a Skill and Dexterity in the Uſe and Management of it, that we may bravely maintain our Virtue, *fight the good Fight of Faith, lay hold on eternal Life*, repel the fiery Darts of the Wicked, and be able to *withſtand in the evil Day, and, having done all, to ſtand.*

*Which God, of his infinite Mercy, grant for* JESUS CHRIST's *ſake, to whom, with the* FATHER *and the* HOLY GHOST, *Three Perſons and One* GOD, *be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour and Glory, Adoration and Thankſgiving, henceforth and for ever.* Amen.

SERMON

# SERMON V.

## On GOOD-FRIDAY.

## The Crucifixion of CHRIST.

# SERMON V.

## On *Good-Friday.*

## The Crucifixion of CHRIST.

2 COR. v. 21.

*He hath made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin; that we might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him.*

THE Fall and Redemption of Man are the two great and important Subjects that fill and take up the whole Book of God; there being nothing of any Moment in the Old or New Teſtament, but what ſome way or other, by way of Doctrine or Hiſtory, either directly or remotely, has relation to one or other of them. That awful Tranſaction in the Work of our Redemption, by the meri-

torious Sacrifice of *Chriſt* on the Croſs, together with all the moving Circumſtances of his doleful Paſſion, is what our Church has wiſely thought fit to lay before us in the Chapters, Epiſtles, and Goſpels for this holy Week, in order to prepare our Minds for celebrating the Memorial, and partaking of the Benefits both of his Death and Reſurrection. The Sin of Man had ſo tainted and polluted the whole human Nature, that came pure out of the Hand of God, and had wrought ſo fatal and univerſal a Change and Alteration in the World, that nothing leſs, it ſeems, than a *Tranſformation* of Perſons, Conditions, and Circumſtances, could bring about a Renovation, or reduce Things to ſomething of their primitive Order, and original State. Thus *Heaven* muſt ſtoop and condeſcend, that ſinful Duſt and Aſhes may be purified and exalted. *God* muſt vouchſafe to take our Nature upon him, that we may be qualified to partake of the Divine. The *Righteous* muſt appear in the Form, and ſuffer the Puniſhment of Sinners, that *Sinners* may be accounted and accepted as righteous before God. Innocence itſelf muſt lie under the Imputation of Guilt, that the Curſe of the

Law

Law may be removed, and human Corruption may be aboliſhed. The Son of God muſt tread the Wine-preſs of his Father's Wrath alone, and drink deep of the Cup of Trembling, in order to make Peace between Heaven and Earth, to reconcile God to Men, and Men to God, and deſtroy the Enmity that was between them. The only Beloved muſt be forſaken of God for a Seaſon, that we may not be forſaken by him for ever. He that is Immortal muſt die, that Corruption may be able to put on Incorruption, and *Mortality be ſwallowed up of Life*. The Holy One muſt enter the Chambers of Death, and go down to the Grave, in order to unlock the Priſon-door, to looſe the Priſoners out of the Pit, and open a Way for his Ranſomed to paſs. The Son of the Bleſſed muſt deſcend into Hell, to the State of departed Souls, that his Followers may be made capable of aſcending hereafter into Heaven. The Lord of Life, and King of Glory, muſt ſubmit to Ignominy, Pains, and the Croſs, and endure the Puniſhment of Slaves, that the Servants of Sin, and Captives of Satan, may be *delivered from the Bondage of Corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the Chil-*

*dren of God.* In a Word, the Light of the World muſt ſet in Darkneſs, and *the Sun of Righteouſneſs* undergo a total Eclipſe, that his Redeemed may be delivered out of Darkneſs into his marvellous Light, and *ſhine as Suns in the Kingdom of his Father.* In all theſe Inſtances, (and more might be added) there is an *Exchange*, a *Tranſformation*, and a *Ranſom*: An *Exchange* of one Extreme for another, of Death for Life, of Ignominy for Glory, of Miſery for Happineſs; the former transferred upon our Bleſſed Saviour by his own voluntary Undertaking, the latter conſigned over to the Faithful without the leaſt of their deſerving. Here is likewiſe a *Tranſformation* of Perſons and Conditions; the Righteous ſtands in the Place of Sinners, and Sinners in the Place of the Righteous: The Judge is condemned, and the Guilty pardoned; the Holy One rejected, and the Ungodly juſtified. Laſtly, here is a full and ſufficient *Ranſom*, or equivalent Price paid down, not only in the groſs, but for every particular thing that Man had forfeited by his Diſobedience. Man loſt the Poſſeſſion and Enjoyment of Paradiſe; and the Son of God was content to leave the Regions of

Light,

Light, and the Glories of Heaven, to recover this Loſs, and to reſtore him in due time to his primitive State. Man, by tranſgreſſing the Law of his Maker, diveſted himſelf at once of all Innocence, and of all Righteouſneſs; and the Son of Man, to make up this Loſs, undertook to perform the whole Law in his ſtead, and thereby purchaſed for him the Gift of the Holy Spirit, that ſo by a Righteouſneſs partly conferred upon him, and partly imputed to him, he might find Favour and Acceptance with God. In ſhort, every thing that the firſt Man forfeited, his Life, his Soul, his Happineſs, his Peace of Conſcience, his Superiority and Dominion in this lower World, has, each of them, been purchaſed by our Bleſſed Lord, at the Expence of infinite Pains and Sufferings, at the Price of laying down his own Life, of the Effuſion of his moſt precious Blood, of ſubmitting to Shame and Ignominy, and the greateſt Debaſement, to the moſt bitter Agony, and dreadful Dereliction, to the Fury of Devils, and to the Curſe of God. All which Particulars are fully implied in theſe few, but comprehenſive Words of St. *Paul*; *He hath made him to be Sin*

*for us, who knew no Sin; that we might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him.* Had the Apoſtle ſaid, that God made him to be a *Reproach*, to be a *Curſe*, to be a *Man of Sorrows*, to be a *Spectacle* to the World, he would not ſo ſtrongly and emphatically have expreſſed himſelf, as he has done now, by only ſaying, That *he hath made him to be* SIN; which ſtands at the fartheſt Diſtance from, and in the utmoſt Oppoſition to his bleſſed Nature. For *Sin* is the Sum and Source of all that is *Evil*; as *God* is the Sum and Source of all that is *Good*. And therefore the Apoſtle adds, *He made him to be Sin, who knew no Sin.* And the End and Deſign of all this, was, *That we might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him.* In my farther Diſcourſe therefore on this Paſſage, I ſhall, (1.) Inquire how *Chriſt* our Saviour was *made Sin for us:* And, (2.) Conſider, in what Senſe we may be ſaid to be *made the Righteouſneſs of God in him.*

As to the *Firſt*; It is eaſy to obſerve, that *Chriſt* was not *really* made Sin, or *ſubject* to Sin, which was utterly impoſſible, as he had no original or actual Pollution of Guilt, nor could his Soul be tainted with the leaſt Infection

fection of any moral Impurity, or have any ſinful Paſſion, Inclination, or Affection; becauſe it was not only perfectly pure in itſelf, but vitally united to the Deity, which muſt neceſſarily ſecure it from all Contagion of Sin. The Scripture therefore takes particular Care to guard us againſt any Thought of this kind, by declaring in the fulleſt and plaineſt Terms, as in my Text and other Places, that *Chriſt knew no Sin*, that *in him was no Sin*, that the Devil had *nothing in him*, that he was *holy*, *harmleſs*, *undefiled*, *ſeparate from Sinners*; that tho' he was *tempted like as we are*, yet ſtill *without Sin*; that he was *the Lamb of God*, *without Blemiſh*, *and without Spot*; that *he did no Sin*, *neither was Guile found in his Mouth*: All which, and the like Paſſages, ſhew, that *Chriſt* being ſinleſs, and exempt from Sin, the Words of St. *Paul cannot* be taken in a ſtrict or proper Senſe. We may therefore conſider them as fully or ſufficiently verified in theſe two reſpects: 1. As the Sins of Mankind were imputed to him, and charged upon him: And, 2. As he freely underwent, and actually ſuffered, the Puniſhment due to our Sins.

*Firſt*, *Chriſt* may truly be ſaid to be *made Sin for us*, by having our Sins *imputed to* and *charged upon* him. In order to recover loſt Man to a State of Grace and Favour with God, whoſe Laws he had broken, whoſe Authority he had deſpiſed, and whoſe high Diſpleaſure he had juſtly incurred, two Things were neceſſary; *Firſt*, That the offended Juſtice of God ſhould be ſatisfied, for the Violation of his righteous Laws: and, *Secondly*, That the Nature of Man, which was now tainted and corrupted, and miſerably prone to all Evil, ſhould be renewed and ſanctified: For the Accompliſhment of theſe great Deſigns, our Bleſſed Saviour, out of his infinite Compaſſion to loſt Sinners, and by his own voluntary Choice, took upon him our Nature; that ſo in the ſame Nature that had offended, he might fulfil the whole Law of God, and eſtabliſh a new Covenant upon better Promiſes than the former, and likewiſe become obnoxious to the Curſe which the Law had threatened to Man for his Diſobedience: Both theſe were requiſite and neceſſary, and one without the other had not been ſufficient. For without an Atonement made for Sin, we could have had

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no ſure Grounds to hope for either Grace or Forgiveneſs; and without the Renewal of our Nature, even the Forgiveneſs of Sins would have left us ſtill ſhort of true Happineſs and Salvation. Our Saviour, therefore, firſt undertook to pay an entire Obedience to all the Commandments of God, both of moral and poſitive Inſtitution; which being diſcharged, his Offering of himſelf as a Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind, became thereby more perfect, more acceptable and meritorious, as being the Offering of one who was not only *ſinleſs* and *innocent*, but likewiſe *completely righteous* and *obedient in all things*. Having therefore, in the firſt Place, fulfilled all Righteouſneſs, he then took upon him the Guilt of all Mankind; and from that Time he ſtood charged by God Almighty with all the Sins that had been committed from the Beginning, and would be committed to the End of the World. Thus God transferred the Guilt of Sin from Men upon the *Meſſiah*, and *laid upon him*, as the Prophet ſpeaks, *the Iniquity of us all*. God was then *extreme to mark* whatever had been *done amiſs*, and demanded of him that plenary Satisfaction to his infinite Juſtice, which,

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if demanded of us in Perſon, we could never have made. He inſiſted upon the Payment of the utmoſt Farthing that was due, and exacted the fulleſt Meaſure of Puniſhment, to anſwer the full Meaſure of Man's Sin. He would not abate him one Stripe, or releaſe him from one Pain. His Eye would not pity him, neither would he ſpare out of Favour or Indulgence to his Perſon, in whom at the ſame time he was infinitely well pleaſed. Thus did God make the Bleſſed *Jeſus to be Sin for us*, to be, as it were, all Sin, and nothing but Sin, to be Sin in the Abſtract, to be a whole World of Sin, the Sum and Abridgment of all the Sins of Mankind. And who can conceive the Meaſure and Magnitude of Sin, as it was heaped together, and laid upon our Saviour? And who knoweth the Power of God's Wrath, when he puniſheth Sin, as it deſerves? No Wonder then, that our Bleſſed Lord, when he came to the Combat, was full of Amazement and Horror at the Proſpect or Beginning of his bitter Paſſion. For, tho' he came into the World for that very End; tho' he took a Body, that he might be capable of ſuffering; yet, when the Hour of his Suffering

fering was come, he prayed with all Earneſtneſs, Supplication, and Zeal, that, *if it were poſſible, that Cup might paſs from him.* And never did Nature gain ſo entire a Conqueſt, never did the Powers of Darkneſs receive ſo fatal and total an Overthrow, as when he corrected and ſuppreſſed his ſtrong natural Averſion, and humbly ſubmitted and ſubjoined, *Nevertheleſs not my Will, but thine be done.* By which Will we are ſanctified, redeemed, and ſaved: For it was the Will of our Heavenly Father, that *Chriſt* ſhould ſuffer, *the Juſt for the Unjuſt*, the Pure for the Unclean, the Holy for the Profane, the Maſter for the Servant, the Judge for the Criminal, the moſt Dutiful for the Diſobedient, the Lord of Glory for the Children of Corruption: Every Kind and Degree of Sin was to be charged upon him, who was the Mirror and Pattern of the contrary Virtues. For as the *Scape-goat*, under the Law, was reputed to bear and carry away into the Wilderneſs the Sins of the People of *Iſrael:* So this Lamb of God, that, in the Divine Purpoſe, was ſlain from the Foundation of the World, was ordained by God to bear the Sins of Mankind, to take away the Sin of the

the World, to aboliſh the whole Body of Sin, and to cleanſe us from all Unrighteouſneſs. Thus was God pleaſed to lay upon him the full Weight and Burden of Sin; a Weight too heavy, and a Burden too prodigious, for any mere Creature, or finite Being, to ſuſtain. *He made him to be Sin, who knew no Sin*, that all Extremes might to Appearance meet and centre in him, who came to make Peace between Heaven and Earth, and to purchaſe and eſtabliſh a Reconciliation between a Holy God and his ſinful Creatures. Therefore did God charge upon him, and require of him, the Puniſhment of our Offences, and made him to ſuſtain the Form, the Character, the Confuſion, the Condemnation of a Sinner. And this appeared, in ſome meaſure, thro' almoſt every Stage and Period of his Life, but more particularly and more evidently at the Time of his Crucifixion; when that which was only *charged* upon him before, was now fully and actually *required* of him. At the ſame time, as he freely gave and offered himſelf for us, and bravely overcame all the Reluctances of Nature, and all the Suggeſtions of *Satan*, to diſſuade him from his arduous and glorious Under-

Undertaking, his Crucifixion may be conſidered both as a Puniſhment and as an Expiation for Sin, and as a Victory and Triumph over Death and the Devil. For he conquered by ſuffering; and by becoming *obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs*, he took out the Sting of Death, pacified his Father's Wrath againſt Sinners, *ſpoiled Principalities and Powers*, and all the Enemies of our Salvation, and *made a Shew of them openly, nailing them to his Croſs.* All which is briefly, but finely repreſented, in a ſacred Dialogue between the Prophet *Iſaiah* and the *Meſſiah* —— *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed Garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his Apparel, travelling in the Greatneſs of his Strength? I, that ſpeak in Righteouſneſs, Mighty to ſave. Wherefore art thou red in thine Apparel, and thy Garments like him that treadeth in the Wine-fat? I have trodden the Wine-preſs alone, and of the People there was none with me; and I looked, and there was none to help, and I wondered there was none to uphold; therefore mine own Arm brought Salvation unto me, and my Righteouſneſs it upheld me.* And this leads me to conſider

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the other Senſe of theſe Words—*He hath made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin.* For as *Chriſt* may be truly ſaid to be made Sin for us, by having our Sins imputed to and charged upon him; ſo may he ſtill in a higher Senſe, by actually undergoing the Puniſhment due to our Sins. In order to a right Underſtanding of the Words in this Senſe, we muſt be careful to diſtinguiſh between the *real* and *pretended* Cauſe of *Chriſt's* Sufferings. The *real* Cauſe was the making full Satisfaction to the offended Juſtice of God for the Sins of Men; the *pretended* Cauſe were ſome Crimes alledged againſt him by the *Jews*, who helped to accompliſh the ſecret and determinate Counſel of God for the Redemption of the World, while they were acting againſt the clear Light both of Natural and Reveal'd Religion. The Doctrine of the Croſs is indeed a great Myſtery, and a moſt powerful Motive to Patience and Piety. In the Crucifixion of *Chriſt* there are two Things more particularly, that God deſigned ſhould appear manifeſt and conſpicuous to the World: 1. The ſpotleſs Innocence of the Perſon that ſuffered; and, 2. The peculiar and uncommon Manner of his ſuffering.

ſuffering. By the one *Chriſt* appeared, as he was intended, to be a Sacrifice worthy of God's Acceptance, for the Sins of the World. By the other God might deſign to expoſe and repreſent, in the moſt awful and publick manner, the Odiouſneſs, Deformity, and juſt Demerits of Sin.

*Firſt* then, Let us briefly conſider the ſpotleſs Innocence of the Perſon that ſuffered. This appeared and ſhone with a bright Luſtre, under all the blackeſt Clouds of Ignominy and Oppreſſion. In this Senſe, as well as in that of the Prophet, *He was brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter*, as a *Lamb without Blemiſh, and without Spot*, the Emblem of Innocence as well as of Meekneſs. His Sufferings were ſo far from ſullying or leſſening his Character, that they ſerved rather to embolden and fortify ſome Diſciples of his, that were too diffident and timorous before, and to open the Eyes, and ſoften the Hearts, of many others, that had withſtood the Power and Evidence of his Preaching and Miracles. Notwithſtanding the Blindneſs and Inveteracy of the *Jewiſh* Nation in general, there were not wanting Perſons of all Ranks and Conditions to juſtify and acquit our Lord

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both at his Trial and Crucifixion. *Herod* could find nothing in him worthy of Death, or of Bonds: Nor could his clamorous Accuſers prove any thing againſt him; what they alledged preſently appeared to be falſe, or frivolous, or nothing to the Purpoſe: And the Witneſſes they produced could lay nothing to his Charge, that was either criminal, or cognizable in any Court of Juſtice. What he ſpake of the Temple of his Body, they miſrepreſented and miſapplied to the Temple in *Jeruſalem*; and yet, as the Evangeliſt remarks, *Neither ſo did their Witneſs agree together.* The *Roman* Governor, after every Examination had of the Holy *Jeſus*, always returned with this or a like Anſwer to the People, *I find no Fault in this Man:* And even the Traitor himſelf voluntarily confeſſed that he had *betrayed the innocent Blood.* The penitent Thief on the Croſs, loudly proclaimed the Innocence of his dying Lord, and piouſly acknowledged his Right to that Supremacy of Dominion, which the *Jews* denied and derided him for. The *Centurion*, overpowered with the Force of Truth, and the Convictions of his own Conſcience, could not forbear crying out, *Certainly this was a righteous*

*righteous Man. And all the People that came together to that Sight*, (as St. *Luke* obſerves in the next Words) *beholding the Things that were done, ſmote their Breaſts, and returned*; expreſſing thereby the ſilent Language of their Hearts more forcibly than Words could do, and their ſecret Deteſtation of the unjuſt and barbarous Fact. All Nature at the ſame time gave in its Evidence, and ſeemed to reſent and remonſtrate againſt the Injuries and Indignities done to the Prince of Life. The Sun withdrew his Light, as unwilling and aſhamed to behold the Sufferings of its Creator. The Earth trembled at the dying Groans of the Lord of Nature. The Rocks clave aſunder to upbraid, as it were, the unrelenting Cruelty and Hardheartedneſs of the *Jews*; and the Veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the Top to the Bottom, to ſignify God's Readineſs to depart, and forſake a People, that had embrued their Hands in the Blood of his Anointed. All theſe Teſtimonies, Signs and Prodigies, were ſurely enough (as they were deſigned by God) to convince the World of the Righteouſneſs of the Perſon that then ſuffered, and that he ſuffered not for his own

Sins, but for the Sins of others. For tho' *he knew no Sin*, (nor could the leaſt *Taint* or *Appearance* of Sin be faſtened upon him) yet he was content to be *made Sin for us*: Tho' he was unworthy himſelf of the leaſt Degree of ſuffering, yet for our ſakes he would not refuſe to undergo the greateſt. Which brings me to conſider the ſecond Thing I obſerved, as more particularly remarkable in the Crucifixion of *Chriſt*, namely, the *peculiar* and *uncommon* Manner of his ſuffering.

Tho' Things were left to take their natural Courſe, and to proceed in the common way of Cauſes and Effects; yet there was at that Time ſuch a Combination of unuſual Circumſtances and Occurrences, as never met together before; which, however, were ordered and directed by the over-ruling Power and Providence of God, to ſuch Ends and Purpoſes, as ſerved to bring about the wiſe and merciful Decrees of Heaven, for the Redemption of Mankind, quite contrary to what the Actors themſelves intended, to what the World expected, or the Events themſelves had any Tendency to produce. *But thoſe Things which God before had ſhewed by*

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*the Mouth of all his Prophets that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer*, in ſuch a manner, *he hath ſo fulfilled.* Had not our Lord been betrayed by one of his own Diſciples, he might not have fallen into the Hands of the *Jews:* Had not the *Jews* been then under the Power of the *Romans*, he could not have been condemned to the Death of the *Croſs*, a Puniſhment peculiar to them: Had not the People been perfectly blinded and infatuated, they could not, with ſo much Fury and Tumult, have deſired the Deſtruction of a Perſon, that had wrought ſo many Miracles of Mercy amongſt them: Had not *Pilate* acted againſt the cleareſt Convictions of his own Mind, and the open Confeſſions of his own Mouth, he would not have condemned the Guiltleſs. But all theſe Things were permitted by the determinate Counſel and Foreknowledge of God, for the accompliſhing the great Work of Redemption, without laying any Conſtraint or Force on the Freedom of Mens Wills and Actions. The Crucifixion of *Chriſt* was certainly, all Things conſidered, the moſt extraordinary Event that ever happened, the moſt awful and ſolemn Spectacle that ever the World beheld.

The higheſt Dignity, and the loweſt Debaſement, meeting together on this Occaſion, rendered the Sight both dreadful and venerable. As our Saviour did not live the common Life of Men; ſo neither was his Death like the Death of other Men. The one, in a great meaſure, was all Miracle; and the other, all Myſtery. Not only the *Manner*, but the very *Kind* of Death he ſubmitted to, plainly enough ſhewed, that there was ſomething more than common in the Cauſe of his ſuffering. Tho' born a *Jew*, he ſuffered a Puniſhment which none but the *Romans* did then inflict, which none but Slaves underwent, which was the moſt painful in itſelf, the moſt ignominious in the Eye of the World, and the only one that was deemed accurſed by the Law of God. Nor could his real and apparent Innocence prevail for the leaſt Abatement of Suffering, or exempt him from any of the dire Effects of human Cruelty, or the ſeverer Strokes of divine Vengeance. For when God deſigned to puniſh Sin, as it deſerves, in the Perſon of his only Son, and to expoſe its Guilt and Turpitude to the World, the Righteouſneſs of the Perſon that ſuffered, was not, in this Caſe, to be

be regarded. That belongs to another Conſideration, and was a neceſſary Requiſite to render the Sacrifice or Oblation of himſelf pure and perfect, and worthy of God's Acceptance; for which any *ordinary* Kind of Death might have ſufficed. But the *uncommon* Sufferings of our Lord were plainly intended to ſet forth and exhibit to the Minds and Senſes of Mankind, the odious and deſtructive Nature of Sin. Therefore was he made a Curſe for us, and deſtined to undergo the extreme Malediction of the Law. Therefore were the Gates of Hell laid open, and the Fury of Men and Devils let looſe upon him. *This was their Hour, and the Power of Darkneſs.* And the ſeveral Circumſtances and Aggravations of Shame and Sorrow, that preceded and accompanied his doleful Paſſion, were either the natural or judicial Effects of Man's Sin, a Part of thoſe bitter Ingredients in the Cup of Trembling, which God has mixed and provided for Sinners. Theſe ſeveral Circumſtances have been diſtinctly and particularly laid before us in the Leſſons and Goſpels for this Week. There we may read and remember, what St. *Paul* calls *the Marks of the Lord Jeſus*, the bleeding Tokens of

his tender Love to Mankind; and from thence may be able to form a ſtrong and lively Idea of the horrid Nature and Wages of Sin; which, by this ſad Spectacle, appeared to be *exceeding ſinful.* Indeed the Character of Sin was ſtamped upon every Part of our Saviour's Sufferings; and if we abſtract from the Innocence of his Life, and the Dignity of his Perſon, and conſider him only as ſtanding in the Place of Sinners, we may trace the ugly Monſter thro' all the Steps of his bitter Agonies. For it was Sin that threw him into a bloody Sweat, that betrayed him into the Hands of his Enemies, that expoſed him to cruel Mockings and Scourging, and to the utmoſt Scorn and Contempt, to Deſertion from Men, and Dereliction from God. It was Sin that laid the heavy Burden of the Croſs upon him, and him afterwards upon the Croſs; that ſtripp'd him of his Raiments, and crown'd him with Thorns; that bored his Hands and his Feet, and pierced his Side; that mocked and inſulted him in his dying Agonies, and made him a Spectacle to the World. But as Sin was the Cauſe of his Sufferings and Death; ſo his Death is the Cauſe of our Deliverance from

from Sin. He died *by* Sin, he died to make *Expiation* for Sin, and he died to deliver us from the *Power*, as well as from the *Guilt*, of Sin; yea, not only to deliver us from the Guilt, and Power, and Dominion of Sin, but likewiſe *that we may be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him*; which is the other general Branch of my Text, and which contains a Doctrine of great Comfort and Importance. *The Righteouſneſs of God* is a great Expreſſion, and a greater Thing. But here the Time will not allow me to inlarge: But we may conſider it in ſhort, as implying both our *Juſtification* and *Regeneration*, or all that Goodneſs, Virtue, and Holineſs, which God, for *Chriſt's* ſake, imputes to us, or by his Spirit worketh in us; all that is neceſſary to qualify us for the Enjoyment of Happineſs, and to make a great Part of the Happineſs we are to enjoy. The Apoſtle takes notice, in the Words before my Text, that *God was in Chriſt reconciling the World to himſelf, not imputing their Treſpaſſes unto them.* The Reaſon is, becauſe they were all charged upon *Chriſt*: And as our *Sins* were imputed to him; ſo his *Righteouſneſs* is imputed to us. As he bore our Sins in

his Body on the Tree, and carried our Sorrows; as *he was wounded for our Tranſgreſſions, and bruiſed for our Iniquities:* So we that are grievous Sinners, are made righteous only thro' him. We that have nothing to plead for ourſelves, and no Right to any thing but Puniſhment, are accepted in the Beloved, intitled to the Mercy and Favour of God now, and ſhall be rewarded by him hereafter, by virtue of the Covenant ratified in his Blood, and the Efficacy of his perfect Obedience, and powerful Interceſſion. Let us then *go forth in the Strength of the Lord God, and make mention of his Righteouſneſs only.* Our Bleſſed Lord did not diſdain to appear in the Form of a Sinner, that we might be cloathed with his Righteouſneſs. By condeſcending to be made Sin for us, he deſtroyed the Power of Sin; and invites us to partake of the Benefits of his mighty Conqueſts. Let us not be ſo forgetful of him, and ſuch Enemies to ourſelves, as to refuſe his Invitation, and diſregard the Pledges of his Love. How can we hope for Mercy, if we ſlight, or but ſeem to undervalue, this myſterious and moſt merciful Diſpenſation? *How can we eſcape, if*

*we*

*we neglect ſo great Salvation?* Can we think that nothing is due or required on our Parts, for ſuch unparallelled Condeſcenſion, ſuch mighty and marvellous Undertakings, ſuch aſtoniſhing Proofs and Demonſtrations of the tendereſt Love, Compaſſion and Mercy? He that has taken ſuch infinite Pains for our ſakes, does moſt reaſonably expect and demand, that we ſhould take ſome Pains for ourſelves, and make ſome proper Returns of Duty and Gratitude for ſuch innumerable Benefits, and ineſtimable Bleſſings. But what Reward can we give unto him? or what Words are ſufficient to expreſs our Thankfulneſs on this Occaſion? Every thing that he has done and ſuffered for us, has been purely from a Motive and Principle of Love, to promote the Honour of his Father, and the Happineſs of Men. But we can do nothing for him, without benefitting ourſelves at the ſame time. If we ſtudy to ſerve and pleaſe him, we take the moſt effectual Courſe to pleaſe ourſelves: If we ſeek to advance his Honour, we are ſure at laſt to advance our own: If we obey his Commandments, we know that in keeping of them there is great Reward. In a Word, we can do nothing for him, nothing

for

for our Fellow-chriſtians, without conſulting our own Intereſt at the ſame time. Yet all theſe Things will this great Lover of Souls graciouſly accept at our Hands, if done from a Principle of Faith and Obedience: Nor does he require or impoſe any thing upon us, but with a View to our real Good, and endleſs Advantage. He only requires Truth in the inner Parts; and promiſes to accept of our Sincerity inſtead of Perfection, and of Repentance inſtead of Innocence: And whatever elſe may be wanting, he himſelf will graciouſly ſupply. When he invites us to his holy Table, 'tis for this very End, *namely*, to give us a freſh Inſtance, a ſure Pledge, and new Demonſtration of his Love to us, to fulfil us with his Grace, and heavenly Benediction; to make us partake of his Holineſs, that we may be Partakers of his Happineſs. *There* he makes himſelf known to us in the breaking of Bread: *There* he ſhews us his Hands and Side, thoſe gaping Wounds in the pouring out of the Wine, that lively Emblem of his precious Blood-ſhedding, *which ſpeaketh better Things than that of Abel.* In a Word, *there* he repreſents himſelf to us, as crucified among us; and *there* we may hear him,

him, as it were, ſpeaking to us to this or the like Effect——Do you think that I did not love you, when I gave myſelf a Ranſom for you; when I poured out my Blood, my Life, my Soul, for you Men, and for your Salvation? When I expoſed myſelf to Pains innumerable, and Torments inconceivable? When I lay on the Croſs, wounded, bleeding, and expiring under the greateſt Tortures and Agonies, deſerted by God and Men, and treading the Wine-preſs of my Father's Wrath alone? not able to obtain the poor Relief of a Cup of cold Water to aſſwage the raging Heat of a burning Fever, which your Sins againſt me, which my tender Compaſſion for you, which the Draining of my Blood, and the Pangs of Death, had brought upon me? What greater Teſtimony could I give of my hearty Deſire, that you may be ſaved, than by freely undergoing ſuch Shame and Sufferings, in your Stead, and on your Account, than by being thus made Sin for you, that ye might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in me? *Come then, and let us reaſon together; though your Sins be as Scarlet, they ſhall be as white as Snow; though they be red like Crimſon, they ſhall be as Wool.* Only *take*

*my*

*my Yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in Heart; and ye ſhall find Reſt unto your Souls.* Only believe and repent, obey my Voice, and attend my Calls; and you ſhall want neither Peace nor Comfort here, nor fail to receive the fulleſt Recompence hereafter.

*Now to God the* FATHER, *God the* SON, *and God the* HOLY GHOST, *Three Perſons and One* GOD, *be aſcribed, by us and all the World, all Honour and Glory, Adoration and Thankſgiving, now and for evermore.* Amen.

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SERMON

# SERMON VI.

## On Easter-Day.

## The Scripture Proofs of Christ's Resurrection.

# SERMON VI.

## On *Eaſter-Day.*

## The Scripture Proofs of CHRIST's Reſurrection.

ACTS i. 3.

*To whom alſo he ſhewed himſelf alive after his Paſſion, by many infallible Proofs, being ſeen of them Forty Days, and ſpeaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.*

AS it has ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt, by whoſe Inſpiration all Scripture is given, to afford us a more diſtinct and particular, a fuller and larger Account of the Paſſion and Reſurrection of our Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*, than of any other Article of the Chriſtian Faith; we may be aſſured

ſured from hence, both of the great Importance of theſe Doctrines, and of the Neceſſity of being firmly eſtabliſhed in the Belief of them. God would never have taken ſo much Care and Pains, as it were, to preſs and inculcate theſe great Truths upon our Minds and Memories, and to write them in our Hearts, if there had not been ſomething extraordinary in them, and a general Backwardneſs in Men to pay a due Regard and Aſſent to them. We may therefore juſtly conclude, that ſince God has been pleaſed to afford us ſuch abundant Matter of Conviction and Confirmation in theſe Points, it is our Duty to examine and conſider the ſeveral diſtinct Circumſtances, by which they come atteſted and recommended to us. And tho' the humble Faith of pious and ſincere Chriſtians might well enough be contented with a leſſer Degree of Evidence; yet it muſt add very much to the Security and Satisfaction, even of ſuch as theſe, to ſee themſelves, in this Caſe, ſurrounded with Light, and compaſſed about with a whole Cloud of Witneſſes. But as that of *Chriſt's* Reſurrection is the only or chief Subject of this holy Seaſon, I propoſe, in the following Diſcourſe, to

to inquire into the Evidence for this, to examine the Proofs, and to take a View of the Grounds and Reaſons, upon which this important Point of Chriſtian Doctrine is founded and eſtabliſhed. St. *Luke*, in the Words of my Text, obſerves, that *Chriſt ſhewed himſelf alive after his Paſſion, by many infallible Proofs.* Theſe *infallible Proofs* muſt refer to the ſeveral Appearances he made of himſelf to his Diſciples at ſundry Times, and in divers Manners. But before we conſider theſe Appearances, it may be proper to look back a little to the very Beginning of his Reſurrection, and ſee him preparing the Way for his appearing. For as there is a Dawning or Break of Day, before the Sun appears or riſes upon the Earth; ſo before this Sun of Righteouſneſs actually made his Appearance, there were ſome Dawnings or Preludiums of his near Approach. For, *Behold, an Angel of the Lord deſcended from Heaven, and came and rolled away the Stone from the Door, and ſat upon it. His Countenance was like Lightning, and his Raiment white as Snow; and for Fear of him, the Keepers did ſhake, and became as dead Men.* 'Twas an Angel that brought the firſt glad Tidings

of our Lord's Incarnation and Birth: And it is an Angel that is now the firſt Preacher and Publiſher of his Reſurrection: For he told the Women that were then preſent; *Fear not ye; for I know that ye ſeek Jeſus which was crucified: He is not here; for he is riſen, as he ſaid: Come, ſee the Place, where the Lord lay; and go quickly, and tell his Diſciples, that he is riſen from the Dead.* They were to *ſee the Place, where the Lord lay*, before they were to ſee the *Lord himſelf.* They were to hear the Account of his being riſen, from an Angel, to prepare them the better to believe the Teſtimony of their own Senſes. And the other Diſciples were likewiſe to receive the ſame Report from the Women, as they had from the Angel, that they might not be too much terrified and ſurpriſed at his ſudden Appearance. Therefore did he make his Approaches gradually, and tenderly conſulted their Infirmity; ſent a Meſſage before him to diſpel the Clouds of Melancholy, to remove their Infidelity, and to prevent their Fright and Conſternation. For tho' they did not believe the Report of the Women, and were afterwards upbraided by him for this their Unbelief;

belief; and tho', when they ſaw him, *they were terrified and affrighted, and ſuppoſed that they had ſeen a Spirit*; yet their Terror and Surprize would have been much greater, if they had ſeen him all at once, without hearing any thing before-hand of his being riſen. And that the unbelieving *Jews* themſelves might not be wholly ignorant of this ſignal Event, (which was ſoon after to be preached to them by the Apoſtles) the Providence of God ſo ordered Matters, that the Keepers appointed to guard the Sepulchre ſhould be Means and Inſtruments of giving 'em ſome previous Notice of it. For theſe were ſo terrified at the bright Appearance of an Angel, and at the violent Shock of an Earthquake at the ſame time, that they left their Watch, and ran into the City, and told the *Jewiſh* Sanhedrim what they had ſeen and felt; and People in a Fright always tell the Truth, at leaſt what they think or believe to be true. Nor could the *Jews* wholly deny or diſbelieve their Report, tho' they endeavoured all they could to ſmother and ſuppreſs it: But that Endeavour ſerved only to ſpread and propagate it the more, as it excited the Curioſity of ſome, and diſpoſed others to a more

ready Reception of that great Truth, when it ſhould be more fully declared and made known to them. Add to this, that tho' our Bleſſed Lord *made his Grave with the Wicked*, yet he roſe from the Grave in Company with his Saints; for at his Reſurrection *the Graves were opened, and many Bodies of Saints which ſlept aroſe, and went into the holy City, and appeared unto many.* And their appearing to others made the Truth of his own Reſurrection the leſs incredible, and the more eaſy to be believed. Thus did our Saviour, by gentle and leiſurely Steps and Degrees, open and prepare the Way for his own appearing to his Diſciples; the ſeveral Inſtances of which, both *before* and *after* his Aſcenſion, I come now to conſider.

The *Firſt* Perſon then that he made himſelf known to, after his Reſurrection, was *Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had caſt ſeven Devils*, and who loved much, becauſe much had been forgiven her; and therefore ſtill waited about the Sepulchre, after *Peter* and *John* were departed from thence; and thereupon was favoured with the *firſt* Sight of her Bleſſed Redeemer. It was indeed ſomewhat dark, or about Day-break, when he

he appeared unto her; but when he called her by Name, ſhe preſently knew his Voice, and afterwards heard thoſe gracious Words proceed out of his Mouth, which none but the Son of God could have uttered——*Touch me not; for I am not yet aſcended to my Father: but go unto my Brethren, and ſay unto them, I aſcend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God.*

His *next* Appearance was to the two other Women, who had been told by the Angel, that he was riſen from the Dead; and as they were running to bring his Diſciples Word, *Jeſus* himſelf met them, and gave them this Salutation, *All hail.* It was now probably open Day, and theſe at firſt Sight were ſo fully ſatisfied and convinced, that it was the ſame *Jeſus* which had been crucified, that *they came and held him by the Feet, and worſhipped him.* Upon which he *ſaid to them, Be not afraid; Go, tell my Brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there ſhall they ſee me.*

The *Third* Time of his appearing, was to two of his Diſciples, at a Village called *Emmaus.* To prepare them for this Manifeſtation of himſelf, he overtook them upon the

Road in the Diſguiſe of a Traveller, appearing in ſuch a different Form, and ſpeaking to them in ſuch a different Voice, that they could not know him. But he introduced a Diſcourſe concerning himſelf, by aſking what they were talking about, and the Cauſe of their being ſo ſad. Then he opened the Scriptures to them, enlightened their Underſtandings, warmed their Hearts, and made them feel and perceive, as it were, that he was not far from them. At laſt he made himſelf known to them in breaking of Bread. But their ſudden Joy for this Diſcovery was a little daſhed by his ſudden diſappearing, and vaniſhing out of their Sight; which however was ſoon to be ſupplied again by another Appearance the ſame Evening.

His *Fourth* Appearance, in all Probability, was to *Simon Peter*, to comfort *him* in particular after his great Sorrow, and to aſſure him, that his great Sin was forgiven. We have not the Particulars of this Appearance. But the other Diſciples ſeem to have given much more Credit to the Relation of this, than to the former Report of the Women; *ſaying, The Lord is riſen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.*

And

And now the reſt of the Apoſtles being ſomewhat prepared and diſpoſed, by theſe gradual Manifeſtations, and previous Diſcoveries, to receive and acknowledge their riſen Saviour, whenever he ſhould vouchſafe his Appearance to them; after the two Diſciples were returned to *Jeruſalem*, and related what they had ſeen and heard; and while they were all aſſembled together in a private Place for Fear of the *Jews*, and were ſat down to Supper late in the Evening, *Jeſus himſelf came and ſtood in the midſt of them, the Doors being ſhut, and ſaid, Peace be unto you. Then were the Diſciples glad, when they ſaw the Lord.* But ſome of them being ſtill under Doubts and Fears, and thinking they ſaw only a Spirit in his Likeneſs, he aſſured them, that it was *He himſelf*; and if they would not yet believe his Words, he bid them believe their own Feeling---*Handle me and ſee; for a Spirit hath not Fleſh and Bones, as ye ſee me have.* And for their farther Satisfaction, and the greater Confirmation of their Faith, he called for ſome Meat, and did eat before them; not that he needed any ſuch Support, but that nothing might be wanting in him to give them the

moſt ſenſible Proofs of his being riſen: And it is obſervable, that all along he did every thing that might be proper or neceſſary for their full Conviction, condeſcending to their Prejudices and Infirmities, and omitting ſcarce any thing that might tend to remove their Scruples, to ſatisfy their Curioſity, and to reſolve their Doubts; as may appear from the following Inſtance. Only I obſerve firſt, that this was the *fifth* Time that *he ſhewed himſelf alive after his Paſſion*, on the *ſame* Day that he roſe from the Dead.

But *Thomas*, one of the Twelve, not being preſent at this Time of his appearing, refuſed to believe the Report and Teſtimony of his Fellow-Apoſtles, and would be ſatisfied with no leſs Demonſtration, than what had ſatisfied them, *viz.* the Evidence of his own Senſes——*Except I ſee in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and put my Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thruſt my Hand into his Side, I will not believe.* It was happy for *us*, as well as for all ſucceeding Chriſtians, that he was ſo peremptory in his Demands, and ſo reſolute in his Unbelief. For this inclined the compaſſionate and condeſcending *Jeſus* to give to this diffident Apoſtle,

Apoſtle, and in him to all doubtful Chriſtians, the ſtrongeſt Aſſurance, the cleareſt Evidence, and the moſt convincing Proof of the Truth and Certainty of his Reſurrection. Then ſaid he to *Thomas*, eight Days after his other Appearance, *Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand, and thruſt it into my Side; and be not faithleſs, but believing.* *Thomas*, upon this full Conviction, being no longer able to with-hold his Aſſent, cried out in a Tranſport of Joy and Aſtoniſhment, *My Lord, and my God!* expreſſing, in the feweſt Words, the fulleſt Aſſurance, and the higheſt Degree of Faith: And it has been obſerved of this Apoſtle, that to make ſome Amends for his paſt Diffidence, he propagated the Goſpel afterwards with invincible Courage, and indefatigable Induſtry.

*Thomas* being thus convinced, our Bleſſed Lord was pleaſed to vouchſafe him ſome farther Satisfaction at his next Appearance, which was the *Seventh*, and to give him, and thoſe that were with him, a plain Proof of what he had before acknowledged, *the Truth of his Divinity.* For this Apoſtle, with *Peter*, *James*, *John*, and *Nathanael*, and

and two others not named, going a fiſhing together, and having caught nothing all Night, *Jeſus* appeared on the Shore the next Morning, but was then unknown to them; and, as if he were in ſome Want, called and ſaid unto them, *Children, have you any Meat?* Upon their anſwering, No, he bid them caſt the Net on the right Side of the Ship, and they ſhould find: *They caſt therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the Multitude of Fiſhes; and though they were ſo many*, no leſs than a hundred fifty and three, and ſaid likewiſe to be *great, yet was not their Net broke.* And no ſooner were they come on Shore, but they ſaw another Wonder, a Dinner provided, or rather *created*, for them, by the immediate miraculous Power of their Saviour. For there was a Fire of Coals, and Fiſh broiling on the Coals, and a ſufficient Quantity of Bread for them all: The Sight of which ſtruck them with ſuch an Awe and Reverence, that, as St. *John* obſerves, *None of the Diſciples durſt aſk him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord*; that is, knowing now that it was not only the ſame *Jeſus* which was crucified, but that he was endued likewiſe with the ſame Divine Power,

Power, which he had ſo often exerciſed before.

His next Appearance, which was the *Eighth*, was to a much greater Number than he had as yet ſhewed himſelf to, even to *above five hundred Brethren* at once. This is mentioned only by St. *Paul*; but he aſſures us, that the far greateſt Part of them was alive, when he wrote the Account, though ſome of them were fallen aſleep. And this Appearance is what *Chriſt* foretold to his Diſciples, the Night before his Paſſion, ſaying, *All ye ſhall be offended becauſe of me this Night; but after that I am riſen again, I will go before you into Galilee.* And when he was actually riſen, he declared the ſame to the Women he met, and bid them go and tell his Brethren, that they *go into Galilee, and there ſhall they ſee me.* And accordingly St. *Matthew* affirms, that *then the eleven Diſciples went away into Galilee, unto a Mountain where Jeſus had appointed them*; where they were probably met by that great Number of other Diſciples from all Parts, mentioned by St. *Paul*, to whom the ſame Notice might be communicated, or they might be led out by the Apoſtles themſelves.

But

But whether this were the ſame, or a diſtinct Appearance, which is not very material to know, we are ſure, from the Authority and Teſtimony of St. *Paul*, that he did appear to ſo many at one Time and Place.

By the ſame Apoſtle we are farther aſſured, that he appeared diſtinctly to St. *James*, the Brother of our Lord, who was the firſt Biſhop of *Jeruſalem*, and who wrote the Epiſtle that goes under his Name; and who is reported to have obliged himſelf, by a ſolemn Oath, not to eat Bread, till he ſaw his Lord riſen from the Dead: Which, if true, might induce the Bleſſed *Jeſus* to manifeſt himſelf to this Apoſtle in a ſeparate and diſtinguiſhing manner.

The *Tenth* and laſt Appearance of our Lord, while on Earth, was on the Day of his Aſcenſion, when he came to his Diſciples, as they were aſſembled together, and then *led them forth as far as to Bethany*, to one Part of the *Mount of Olives*, where *he lift up his Hands, and bleſſed them; and it came to paſs, that while he bleſſed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven*, in the Sight and Preſence of them all. And this Teſtimony of their own Senſes was farther

farther confirmed by the Atteſtation of two Angels, who aſſured them, that *that ſame Jeſus which was taken up from them into Heaven, ſhould ſo come in like manner as they had ſeen him go into Heaven:* And therefore they paid their Adorations to him upon the Place where he was parted from them, and then *returned unto Jeruſalem with great Joy.*

Such were the ſeveral Appearances which *Chriſt* vouchſafed to his Diſciples, after he was riſen from the Dead; ſuch the *many infallible Proofs*, by which he *ſhewed himſelf alive after his Paſſion:* All which taken together, are ſurely abundantly ſufficient to ſatisfy the moſt Scrupulous, and to convince the moſt Unbelieving, and to take away all Plea and Excuſe from Scepticiſm and Infidelity: eſpecially if we conſider what St. *Luke* adds, that *he was ſeen of them forty Days, and ſpake of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*; which is a general Supplement to whatever of this Kind the Evangeliſts have omitted, or the Holy Ghoſt did not think fit to record. For we may very reaſonably ſuppoſe, that his being ſeen of them *forty Days*, implies a more frequent

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Appearance than what is mentioned, and that he was ſeen more than *ten times* by ſome or other of his Diſciples, during that Space of Time. But we want no further Evidence. *What is* written and recorded, for our Conviction and Conſolation, is ſurely enough, and ſeems contrived to ſuit and gratify every Temper, and to anſwer or obviate every Objection. The weaker Sex, who ſhewed more Courage and Conſtancy at our Lord's Crucifixion than the Men did, had the Honour and Pre-eminence conferred upon them, of being the *Firſt* Witneſſes and Publiſhers of his Reſurrection. But if we think *them* a little too credulous, or too eaſy to be deceived, we have for a Counterpoiſe the Stiffneſs and Obſtinacy of St. *Thomas*, who was for a Time reſolute in Unbelief, and Proof againſt all Conviction but that of palpable and ocular Demonſtration. If we can ſuppoſe, that a few mean and illiterate Perſons might be deluded, in ſo plain a Caſe, we can never imagine, that ſuch great Numbers of them together could be ſo totally and univerſally impoſed upon at the ſame Time, and in the ſame Inſtance. Or ſuppoſe that all Mankind could be deceived in this Point, yet ſurely

ſurely none will dare to ſay, that *God* would deceive them; and yet this he muſt do, if he impowered a mere *Spectre* or *Ghoſt* to work a real Miracle, in Confirmation of his being riſen from the Dead; and ſuch the Apoſtles ſaw in the miraculous Draught of Fiſhes. If we may not abſolutely truſt to our *Sight* alone, yet even the Teſtimony of this may be looked upon as infallible, when joined with thoſe other of *Hearing* and *Feeling*; which was the preſent Caſe: And therefore St. *John* produces the Teſtimony of all thoſe three Senſes together——*That which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our Eyes, which we have looked upon, and our Hands have handled, of the Word of Life, declare we unto you.* If we cannot always certainly conclude a Sameneſs of Perſon, from a ſeeming Sameneſs of Voice; yet great Streſs ought to be laid upon the Force and Tenor of *his* Words, who *ſpake as never Man ſpake*; Words that were all heavenly and divine, full of Authority, and full of Grace, *teaching the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* The Apoſtles had their Commiſſion now inlarged by him, and were commanded to preach the Goſpel to every Creature, not

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to the *Jews* only, but alſo to the *Gentiles*; and they received and felt a Divine Power communicated to them, when he *breathed on them, and ſaid, Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt.* It is true, after all, they did not ſee him riſe out of his Grave, but they ſaw what was abundantly more convincing; they ſaw him viſibly and gradually aſcending up into Heaven, *till a Cloud received him out of their Sight.*

So very full and particular, and even nice and exact, are the ſacred Writers, in the Evidences and Teſtimonies they give us of this moſt material and momentous Point, *the Reſurrection of Chriſt.* Nor is this all the Evidence they have to produce: Some Part, and that no inconſiderable Part, is ſtill behind: For our Bleſſed Lord, as if he had not done enough, while he was upon Earth, to ſatisfy Mankind in this Point, took care to confirm the Truth of his Reſurrection by ſome illuſtrious Appearances *after his Aſcenſion.* The Belief of this, he knew, was ſo very neceſſary and important, that even after he had taken Poſſeſſion of his Heavenly Kingdom, he did not leave himſelf without Witneſs, without abundant Witneſs, in this Caſe:

Caſe: But bore Record from Heaven to the Truth of this great Article of our Faith, by three freſh and diſtinct Appearances to three choſen Saints and Servants of his; namely, to St. *Stephen*, the firſt Martyr for the Chriſtian Cauſe; to St. *Paul*, the firſt remarkable Convert to Chriſtianity; and to St. *John*, the laſt and longeſt Liver of all the Apoſtles: That as he had three Witneſſes to behold his Transfiguration on the Mount, and three to be preſent at his Agony in the Garden; ſo now he would have three to behold him after his Aſcenſion and Exaltation. But to conſider and examine theſe Evidences diſtinctly and apart.

*Firſt*, It is expreſly ſaid of St. *Stephen*, *That he being full of the Holy Ghoſt, looked up ſtedfaſtly into Heaven, and ſaw the Glory of God, and Jeſus ſtanding on the Right-hand of God; and ſaid, Behold, I ſee the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man ſtanding on the Right-hand of God.* Here is the ſtrongeſt Teſtimony, and the cleareſt Evidence that can be given. Heaven itſelf is laid open, to convince the World, that *Jeſus is riſen indeed*, and *ſtanding at the Right-hand of God.* And the Witneſs in this Caſe is the moſt au-

thentick and unexceptionable; a Man full of Faith, and of the Holy Ghoſt, of the greateſt Courage, and invincible Patience; who no ſooner gave in this Teſtimony, but he ſealed the Truth of it with his Blood. What he ſaw, was not in a Dream or Night-Viſion, or the Effect of a ſtrong Fancy, or religious Melancholy. No; his extraordinary Behaviour both before and after; his admirable Defence of *Chriſt*, and the Chriſtian Cauſe, before the *Jewiſh* Council; his remarkable Serenity and Compoſedneſs of Mind, which viſibly diſplayed itſelf in his Countenance; and above all, the laying down his Life in Confirmation of what he declared and teſtified, are ſuch plain undeniable Tokens of Truth and Soberneſs, as clear him from all Suſpicion of *Enthuſiaſm* and *Inſincerity*, and render his Teſtimony the moſt valuable and indiſputable.

The *next* Witneſs is St. *Paul*, whoſe Teſtimony is the more to be regarded, becauſe the Teſtimony of an Enemy, of the greateſt Perſecutor, at that time, of the Church of *Chriſt*; who ſet out early in this way, and, while young, was aiding and abetting at the Martyrdom of St. *Stephen*, and *kept the Raiment*

*ment of them that ſlew him.* This furious Zealot, while breathing out nothing but Threatenings and Slaughters againſt the Diſciples of *Chriſt*, was ſtopt in the midſt of his Career by *Chriſt himſelf.* For as he was going to *Damaſcus*, with Letters and Authority from the Chief Prieſts to bind all that called on that Name, *ſuddenly he ſaw a Light from Heaven above the Brightneſs of the Sun, and heard a Voice ſaying unto him, Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?* Upon aſking who it was, the Voice replied, *I am Jeſus of Nazareth, whom thou perſecuteſt.* And what more convincing Proof can be deſired of the Truth of *Chriſt's* Reſurrection? eſpecially if we take in the Circumſtances and Conſequences of this Viſion and Voice from Heaven, which were the Apoſtle's immediate Converſion, his preaching boldly ſoon after in the Name of *Jeſus*, his ſtrong and nervous Writings in Defence of the ſame Cauſe, his indefatigable Labours, innumerable Sufferings, and being *offered* at laſt, as he ſpeaks, *upon the Sacrifice and Service* of the Chriſtian *Faith:* All which is a ſtanding Monument, and laſting Evidence, of the Truth and Certainty of our Lord's Reſurrection. For had not this Apo-

ſtle ſeen *Chriſt* in the manner he deſcribes, and heard him ſaying unto him, *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?* and afterwards followed the Directions which he gave him, we can ſee no Reaſon, and can give no manner of Account, how this furious Perſecutor of the Chriſtians commenced ſo glorious an Apoſtle; who has wrote likewiſe ſo fully and forcibly on the Subject of our Saviour's Reſurrection; and in ſumming up the Evidence for the Truth of it, brings in himſelf in the Rear; *Laſt of all, he was ſeen of me alſo.* But this one Sight of him was equal to any that went before, with reſpect both to the Certainty of the Fact, and the bleſſed Effects that enſued. For, as I hinted before, the Teſtimony of an open Zealot for the *Jewiſh* Religion, and profeſſed Enemy to Chriſtianity, is a Teſtimony of the greateſt Validity, a Teſtimony beyond Exception. And then, as to the Conſequences, I may ſay, that upon this Viſion of our Saviour, depended in a manner the Converſion of the *Gentile* World. For it was by this that St. *Paul* was called, converted, and choſen to *bear the Name of Chriſt before the Gentiles, and Kings, and Children of Iſrael.* But ſtill

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ſome may ſay, that St. *Paul* did not know *Chriſt before-hand*, and therefore could not be abſolutely ſure, that the Perſon who ſpake to him in the Air, was the ſame that had been crucified. Tho' this be an Objection, that ſcarce deſerves an Anſwer, yet allowing it all the Force it will bear, it is quite overthrown by what happened or was vouchſafed to St. *John*. For if we can ſhew, that any of the Apoſtles, who ſaw and converſed with our Saviour after he was riſen from the Dead, did ſee and hear him after his Aſcenſion; this, I preſume, will put the Matter beyond all reaſonable Doubt, yea, beyond all poſſible Exception and Contradiction. Now this is the Favour that was indulged St. *John*, and this is the concluding Teſtimony, that ſeals and ſhuts up the Proofs and Evidences of *Chriſt*'s Reſurrection. He that lay in his Boſom at Supper, and was the only Apoſtle we read of that attended him at his Crucifixion, he only was admitted to a Sight of him after his Aſcenſion: And that in ſo glorious, and awful, and reſplendent a manner, as proclaimed his Divinity as well as Humanity, and proved the Truth of his Aſcenſion into Heaven, as well as his Reſurrection from

the Dead; which at the ſame time likewiſe he confirmed to his Apoſtle, and to all ſucceeding Chriſtians, in thoſe ever-memorable Words—*I am the Firſt and the Laſt; I am he that liveth, and was dead: And, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the Keys of Hell, and of Death.* From which Words we may obſerve, that the Truth and Certainty of *Chriſt*'s Reſurrection was confirmed to this Apoſtle by the Teſtimony of three of his Senſes; for our Saviour did not only appear and ſpeak to him, but *laid his Hands upon him, ſaying, Fear not; I am he that liveth, and was dead.* Either of theſe Witneſſes, conſidered alone, might be ſufficient to ſatisfy any reaſonable, unbiaſſed, and impartial Inquirer after this important Truth. But when viewed and conſidered all together, they not only powerfully incline, but almoſt command our Aſſent; and *they* muſt be very wicked, or very blind, that can reſiſt and withſtand their Evidence. For what more infallible Proofs could our Lord have given of his Reſurrection, for the Conviction of an unbelieving World, beſides thoſe given *before*, than he has done *ſince* his Aſcenſion, by ſhewing himſelf to one of his Diſciples,

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(in the midſt of the People and Rulers of the *Jews*) as *ſtanding on the Right-hand of God*; by calling out of Heaven to one of his fierceſt Perſecutors, and telling him that he was *Jeſus of Nazareth, whom he perſecuted*; and by appearing, touching, and ſpeaking to St. *John* after his Aſcenſion, and farther confirming this Truth with his own Hands and Mouth? Such is the Evidence we have from Heaven, from *Chriſt* glorified, in Proof of this prime Article of the Chriſtian Faith; ſuch the *many infallible Proofs*, by which he ſhewed himſelf alive to his Diſciples after his Paſſion. *Leſs* than theſe might have been ſufficient; and *more* than theſe could not be neceſſary: If they had, we may be ſure, the Divine Goodneſs would have vouchſafed them to us. But in all ſuch Caſes there muſt be ſome Room left for Doubts and Objections: Otherwiſe *Faith* would be no *Virtue*. But then, in theſe Caſes, there is a Fulneſs and Sufficiency of Evidence, beyond which, if we ſeek for Satisfaction, we may be left, by the juſt Judgment of God, to wander in endleſs Labyrinths of Error and Deluſion. And therefore, as our Bleſſed Saviour ſtated and determined the Caſe, with

reſpect to the *Jews* of his Time — *If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the Dead:* So may we ſay, with reſpect to all future Generations, if they believe not the Proofs that are given of his Reſurrection by his Apoſtles and Evangeliſts, neither will they be perſuaded, tho' an Angel from Heaven ſhould declare it unto them.

From what has been ſaid, I ſhall now make two brief Obſervations, and conclude.

*Firſt* then, If we deſire to build up ourſelves in our moſt holy Faith, we muſt take particular Care, that the Foundation we lay be firm and ſtrong. The Foundation of all true Religion, both in Faith and Practice, is the Reſurrection of *Chriſt*. And according as we are, more or leſs, rooted and grounded in this prime important Point of Chriſtian Doctrine; ſo ſhall we be conſtant or unſtable in all our Ways. God has been pleaſed to afford us abundant Matter for the Exerciſe and Improvement of our Underſtandings in this reſpect. He has given us *many infallible Proofs* of the Truth and Certainty of this great Article. And wherefore are theſe Things written, but for our Admonition and In-

Inſtruction, for the Increaſe and Confirmation of our Faith, and the promoting a ſuitable Practice? The more we conſider our Lord's Reſurrection, the more Light and Encouragement ſhall we receive from it; the more we ſhall ſee its Weight and Importance, and the Obligations that ariſe from it. And therefore,

*Secondly*, Having laid and ſecured this Foundation, let us build upon it, and go on to Perfection. The Reſurrection of *Chriſt* will bear all the Weight that we can lay upon it, the whole Fabrick of Chriſtian Morality, and all that Faith, Hope, Truſt, and Aſſurance, that we are capable of attaining to in this Life. The End of our Faith is the Salvation of our Souls: And this Salvation is the Purchaſe and Product of *Chriſt*'s Death and Reſurrection; whereby he *has aboliſhed Death, and brought Life and Immortality to Light*; and given us an Entrance into the high and holy Place: Provided only, that we take care to conform ourſelves to his new State of Life, by riſing ourſelves from a Death of Sin to a Life of Righteouſneſs, by ſetting our Affections on Things above, and having our Converſation in Heaven, by walking

ing by Faith, and not by Sight, and doing all ſuch good Works, as he has prepared for us to walk in.

*Which God, of his infinite Mercy, grant, for* JESUS CHRIST's *ſake, to whom, with the* FATHER *and the* HOLY GHOST, *Three Perſons and One* GOD, *be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour and Glory, Adoration and Praiſe, now and for evermore.* Amen.

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SERMON

# SERMON VII.

## The Aſcenſion of our Lord.

# SERMON VII.

## The Ascension of our Lord.

# SERMON VII.

## The Aſcenſion of Our LORD.

LUKE xxiv. 50, 51, 52, 53.

*And he led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lift up his Hands, and bleſſed them. And it came to paſs, while he bleſſed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. And they worſhipped him, and returned to Jeruſalem with great Joy: And were continually in the Temple, praiſing and bleſſing God. Amen.*

THE Account of our Bleſſed Saviour's Aſcenſion into Heaven is delivered to us in the fulleſt manner by this Evangeliſt; while the others are either wholly ſilent as to this Point, or give us but a ſhort and general Account of it.

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St. *Matthew* takes no Notice of this great Article of our Faith, concluding his Goſpel with the Hiſtory of *Chriſt*'s Reſurrection, and of his laſt Diſcourſe and Commiſſion to his Apoſtles. St. *Mark*, according to his uſual Brevity, relates the Matter in very few, but comprehenſive Words——*So then, after the Lord had ſpoken unto them, he was received up into Heaven, and ſat on the Right-hand of God.* St. *John* ſays nothing directly of the Aſcenſion, perhaps becauſe the Evangeliſt that wrote next before him, was ſo full and particular in his Relation: And the Reaſon why St. *Luke* is ſo large, clear, and diſtinct on this Head, is plainly to ſupply the Defects and Omiſſions of the two former Evangeliſts, and to confirm us the more in the Belief of this important Article of our Lord's *Aſcenſion*; which indeed is no other than the Reſult and Conſequence of his Reſurrection. For after our Bleſſed Saviour was riſen from the Dead, it could not be ſuppoſed, that he would always continue in this lower World. And *whither* ſhould he go, when he was riſen, but to the Place from whence he came? *He that aſcended*, ſays the Apoſtle, *is the ſame alſo that deſcended.*

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As he came down from Heaven to reveal his Father's Will to Mankind, it was moſt reaſonable to conclude, that he would return to Heaven again. When he had finiſhed the great Work he came about, and had given his Diſciples the fulleſt Satisfaction, with reſpect to the Truth and Reality of his Reſurrection, and ſufficiently inſtructed them in all things neceſſary for them to know for the preſent, his bodily Preſence was no longer neceſſary or proper. On the contrary, his Departure from them was expedient on a double Account, both with reſpect to them and to himſelf; that *he* might receive the Reward of his Humiliation and Sufferings, and that *they* might be able to ſet about the great Work for which they were choſen and ordained, which they could not have undertaken ſo long as he was preſent with them, at leaſt, not in that ample and extenſive manner as our Lord had deſigned they ſhould; which was to go into all the World, and preach the Goſpel to every Creature: But they could not leave their Maſter, before he was obliged to leave them. So that the Neceſſity of our Lord's Aſcenſion into Heaven is plain and perſpicuous enough, from the

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Deductions of Reaſon, under the Directions of a general Revelation. However, that a Matter of ſuch great Moment might be more firmly eſtabliſhed, it ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt, by whoſe Motion and Inſpiration all Scripture is given, to make known to us by St. *Luke* the particular Manner, and Circumſtances, and Conſequences of *Chriſt*'s Aſcenſion; which this Evangeliſt has particularly related, both in the Beginning of his Hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles, as well as here in the Concluſion of his Goſpel: Both which, conſidered and compared together, will give us a clear and lively Notion of the hiſtorical Part of this Article of our Faith. In the former Paſſage St. *Luke* obſerves of our Bleſſed Saviour, that *when he had ſpoken thoſe Words*, (which he had mentioned before) *while they beheld, he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight. And while they looked ſtedfaſtly towards Heaven, as he went up, behold, two Men ſtood by them in white Apparel; which alſo ſaid, Ye Men of Galilee, Why ſtand ye gazing up into Heaven? This ſame Jeſus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, ſhall ſo come in like manner, as ye have ſeen*

*ſeen him go into Heaven.* And then in the Text, the Manner of our Lord's parting with his Apoſtles is particularly mentioned---*And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lift up his Hands, and bleſſed them: And it came to paſs, while he bleſſed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. And they worſhipped him, and returned to Jeruſalem with great Joy: And were continually in the Temple, praiſing and bleſſing God. Amen.* In ſpeaking to which Words, I ſhall (1.) Conſider what our Bleſſed Saviour did and ſpoke to his Apoſtles, before he was parted from them, in order to reconcile them the better to his Departure. (2.) His actual Separation from them, or the Truth and Reality of his Aſcenſion, expreſſed here by his being *carried up into Heaven.* (3.) The Behaviour of the Apoſtles upon the Account, and immediately after his Aſcenſion. And,

*Firſt*, We are to conſider our Lord's prudent Tenderneſs to his Apoſtles, before he was parted from them, in order to reconcile them the better to his Departure.

From the Day of his riſing from the Dead, he took particular Care to prepare them for

the Time of his Aſcenſion, as well as to ſatisfy them of the Truth of his Reſurrection: After which, we know, he continued forty Days upon Earth; and during thoſe forty Days he had ſeveral Interviews and Diſcourſes with his Apoſtles, but was not conſtantly preſent with them. But where he retired, or where his Abode was, during his Abſence from them, the Scripture is altogether ſilent: And as God has not thought fit to reveal this to us, it would be a needleſs and vain Curioſity in us to make any Inquiry about it. All I obſerve, is, that after our Lord was riſen from the Dead, and before he aſcended into Heaven, he was ſometimes preſent with his Diſciples, but much oftener abſent. The Day of his riſing, he appeared no leſs than five times to ſome or other of his Followers, in order to comfort them under their preſent Melancholy and Dejection; to quicken their Faith, and revive their Hopes, that were then juſt expiring. And this he might think a ſufficient Stay and Support for them for ſome Days; and therefore he did not make his ſecond Appearance, till the next firſt Day of the Week: At which time he ſatisfied the Doubts and Scruples of St. *Thomas*, and fully convinced

convinced him, that he was riſen indeed. After this he appeared to ſome of the Apoſtles at the Sea of *Tiberias*; then on a Mountain in *Galilee* to above five hundred Brethren at once; and laſtly, to St. *James* in particular, as the Brother of our Lord. At all which times, as St. *Luke* obſerves in general, *He ſpake of Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* Now our Lord's Deſign in all this ſeems plainly to have been, to wean his Apoſtles by degrees from his bodily Preſence, and thereby prepare them for their future Employment. Had he aſcended into Heaven ſoon after he roſe from the Dead, or had he been conſtantly with them, after his Reſurrection, during his forty Days Continuance upon Earth, his Departure from them muſt have occaſioned the greateſt Grief and Concern; and ſo his very *Aſcenſion* might have proved to them almoſt as melancholy and diſmal as his *Crucifixion*, and rendered them unfit both for the Diſcharge of their Duty, and for the Reception of the Holy Ghoſt. But the Method which *Chriſt* took to withdraw from his Diſciples by leiſurely and inſenſible Degrees, gave them a greater Reverence for his Perſon, and prepared them

the better for his final Departure from them. *Before his Paſſion*, he had often told them, that he muſt return to his Father; ſhewed them the Neceſſity or Expediency of his going away, that ſo the Comforter might come unto them. But whenever he ſpake of theſe Things, as he obſerved himſelf, Sorrow preſently filled their Hearts. But now being accuſtomed for the Space of forty Days to be frequently abſent from him, and to converſe with him but ſeldom, they were in a ready Diſpoſition of Mind to ſee him taken away from them, and to behold his Aſcenſion into Heaven with quite different Sentiments from what they had before entertained. Being thus happily pre-diſpoſed to be Eye-witneſſes of his glorious Exaltation, the laſt Day he came amongſt them, as they were aſſembled together; and after ſome Diſcourſe with them, inlarging their Power and Commiſſion, and commanding them not to depart from *Jeruſalem*, till they had received the Promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt, he then led them forth to that Part of Mount *Olivet*, which lies near *Bethany*; and there diſcourſing with them for ſome little time, *he lift up his Hands, and bleſſed them*; that

is,

is, he gave them his final Benediction, in the moſt ſolemn and ſucceſsful manner; which, tho' the Form of it be not recorded, we find was ſo comforting and encouraging, ſo powerful and efficacious, as to diſpel their Sorrow, and remove their Fears; and they who *before* could not bear the Mention of their Lord's Departure, were *now* ready to entertain it with Satisfaction and Joy. *And it came to paſs, while he bleſſed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven:* Which is,

The *Second* general Branch of my Text, importing his actual Separation from them, or the Truth and Reality of his Aſcenſion, which I come now to conſider: In order to which, it may be obſerved, that tho' our Lord gave his Apoſtles frequent and ſufficient Intimations before-hand of his Aſcenſion, as alſo of his Reſurrection, yet they were ſlow and averſe to believe either one or the other. As to his *Reſurrection*, when *Chriſt*, after his Transfiguration, charged his Diſciples, that they ſhould *tell no Man what things they had ſeen, until the Son of Man were riſen from the Dead*, 'tis expreſly ſaid, that *they queſtioned one with another, what*

*the riſing from the Dead ſhould mean.* So little Faith or Apprehenſion had they of his *Reſurrection*, before he actually roſe from the Dead, and ſhewed himſelf alive to them by many infallible Proofs. Nor do they ſeem to have had any ſtronger Belief, or juſter Notion, of his *Aſcenſion*, till the Day in which he was taken up from them, and *a Cloud received him out of their Sight.* For when he reproved their Slowneſs of Underſtanding, and their taking Offence at his Diſcourſe about eating his Fleſh, and drinking his Blood, in the ſixth of St. *John*, he mentions this as a Matter that would appear more incredible, and that would hereafter very much ſurpriſe them——*What, and if ye ſhall ſee the Son of Man aſcend up where he was before?* But this, and the like Intimations, made ſo little Impreſſion upon them, that on the very Day of our Lord's Aſcenſion, they ſeem to have been under ſome Expectation of his aſſuming then a temporal Sovereignty; and therefore aſked him this Queſtion —— *Lord, Wilt thou at this time reſtore the Kingdom again to Iſrael?* Now this Slowneſs of Belief and Apprehenſion in the Apoſtles, as to this Point, is for the more Con-

Confirmation of our Faith, and renders their Teſtimony the more credible and unexceptionable. It was, doubtleſs, no ſmall Surprize to them, to ſee their Lord and Maſter taken from them all on a ſudden, and aſcending by degrees in the Clouds, and carried triumphantly into Heaven. They were all preſent at this wondrous Sight; and while they were wondring, and full of Admiration at the great unexpected Event, two of our Lord's glorious Retinue were left behind, to give them the fulleſt Satisfaction, and the ſtrongeſt Aſſurance, that their Lord was really aſcended, or then aſcending into Heaven---*Ye Men of Galilee, Why ſtand ye gazeing up into Heaven? This ſame Jeſus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, ſhall ſo come in like manner, as ye have ſeen him go into Heaven.* In which Words the Angels confirm the Teſtimony of the Apoſtles by their own; *q. d.* You have ſeen *Jeſus* with your own Eyes taken up from you, and we aſſure you, that he is taken up into Heaven, and that he will come again in the ſame manner, as he has now aſcended; that is, with his holy Angels, and in the Clouds of Heaven. There is no Doubt to be made,

but that a great Number of Angels attended our Lord in his triumphant Paſſage from Earth to Heaven. Indeed, as they are Spirits, or inviſible Beings, they could not be ſeen by the naked Eyes of the Apoſtles, unleſs they had aſſumed a human or bodily Shape, as two of them, we find, were appointed to do, for the Purpoſe before-mentioned. But as there was a *Multitude of the heavenly Hoſt* to give Notice to the Shepherds of the Birth of our Saviour, and to ſing Praiſes to God on that joyful Occaſion; ſo we may very reaſonably ſuppoſe, that no leſs a Number of the heavenly Hoſt, if not the whole Choir of Angels, was ſent forth to attend their Lord and King with joyful Acclamations, when he went to take Poſſeſſion of his Heavenly Kingdom. For if he will come again *in the ſame manner* as he went into Heaven, we muſt conclude, that his Retinue on the Day of his Aſcenſion was as great and numerous, as it will be on the Day of his coming to Judgment. And then we are aſſured, that *all his holy Angels will be with him.* And 'tis ſomewhat remarkable, that our Bleſſed Saviour is here ſaid to be *carried up into Heaven*, which could not be by the Clouds,

Clouds, they reaching no farther than the lower Region. It muſt therefore be by the *Angelick Hoſt*; and we may obſerve, that *Angels* are ſaid in Scripture to be not only *God's Hoſt*, but his *Chariot*, upon which he rides, or is carried in Triumph, when he is deſcribed after the manner of Men, as coming down from Heaven to take Vengeance of his Enemies. Thus the Pſalmiſt repreſents him —— *He bowed the Heavens alſo, and came down, and Darkneſs was under his Feet: And he rode upon Cherubim, and did fly upon the Wings of the Wind.* Thus again—— *The Chariots of God are twenty thouſand, even thouſands of Angels.* And this was prophetically ſpoken, with a particular Eye to *Chriſt*'s Exaltation, as appears from the following Words——*Thou haſt aſcended on high, thou haſt led Captivity captive, thou haſt received Gifts for Men, yea, for the Rebellious alſo, that the Lord God might dwell among them.* In this triumphant manner, with an innumerable Company of Angels, as we may moſt reaſonably conclude, did our Bleſſed Lord aſcend into the higheſt Heavens, paſſing thro' the ſeveral Celeſtial Orbs, till he came into the Palace and Preſence of the Great King,

King, and was brought and preſented before the *Antient of Days*, as the Prophet *Daniel* had foretold, and there inveſted with ſupreme Dominion over all Creatures in Heaven and Earth, *being made ſo much better than the Angels, as he has by Inheritance a more excellent Name than they.* This Circumſtance of *Chriſt*'s Aſcenſion was lively typified in the Aſſumption of *Elijah* into Heaven, which was on this manner: As he and *Eliſha* were walking and talking together, *Behold, there appeared a Chariot of Fire, and Horſes of Fire; and coming between them, parted them both aſunder, and Elijah went up by a Whirlwind into Heaven.* Theſe *Chariots* and *Horſemen* were, doubtleſs, no other than Part of the heavenly Hoſt, which took up *Elijah*, and carried him into Heaven. In like manner, was our Saviour *Chriſt* taken up from Earth, in the Preſence of his Apoſtles, and carried up to Heaven, ſurrounded with a bright Retinue of Angels, who attended him in his glorious Paſſage, and conducted him to the heavenly Manſions, where he is ſeated, as St. *Paul* aſſures us, (who was himſelf an Eye-witneſs of the Glories of Heaven, and of his glorified Saviour) *far*

*above*

*above all Principality and Power, and Might and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but alſo in that which is to come.*

Having thus conſidered what our Bleſſed Lord did and ſpoke to his Apoſtles *before* and *at* the time of his parting with them, in order to reconcile them the better to his Departure, and likewiſe the Truth and Reality, the Manner and Circumſtances of his Aſcenſion; it will now be proper for us to conſider ſome of the principal Ends and Conſequences of that great Event.

One of which was, as he expreſly tells us himſelf, that he might ſend the Comforter to them---*Nevertheleſs, I tell you the Truth; it is expedient for you, that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will ſend him unto you.* In which Words our Saviour plainly intimates, that the coming of the Holy Ghoſt would be of greater Advantage to his Apoſtles, than his own bodily Preſence; and that it was *expedient*, or according to the Order and Oeconomy of the Divine Counſel and Proceedings, that *He* ſhould aſcend into Heaven, before the *Holy Spirit* deſcended

deſcended upon Earth. Tho' each of the Three Divine Perſons be All-powerful and All-ſufficient, and abundantly able to anſwer and ſupply all our Needs; yet as the Scripture conſtantly aſcribes unto each a diſtinct Office, and different Operations, we muſt be careful not to confound one with the other. The peculiar and diſtinguiſhing Office of the Holy Ghoſt is to comfort and ſanctify all the elect People of God. And our Bleſſed Saviour, (whoſe Undertaking and Office is to be a Mediator between God and Man, as partaking of the Nature of both) being very deſirous, that his Church in general, and his Apoſtles in particular, ſhould enjoy the comfortable and ſanctifying Influences of the Bleſſed Spirit, gave them a Promiſe of this great Bleſſing before his Departure from them; and ſignified withal, that his Departure was really neceſſary for that End. For tho', by the Oblation of himſelf upon the Croſs, he had made full Satisfaction for their Sins; yet his Preſence in Heaven might be requiſite, in order to procure for them the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit. The Prieſt's Office, under the Law, conſiſted of two Parts: The firſt was to offer Sacrifice for

for the Sins of the People; and the other to intercede with God for their Pardon and Acceptance. The firſt Part of this Office our Saviour diſcharged, while he was upon Earth; but the other he is continually diſcharging in Heaven. As he *ever liveth to make Interceſſion for us*; ſo the End and Deſign of this Interceſſion is, that we may be repleniſhed with ſpiritual Gifts, and fulfilled with the Grace and Benediction of the Holy Ghoſt. This he ſufficiently ſignified to his Apoſtles, while he was with them, in theſe remarkable Words: *I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.* He does not ſay, that he *had* or *did* then, but that he *would* pray to the Father: and as the Spirit was not given, till he was glorified; ſo 'tis plain from hence, that this great Gift upon his Church was the direct and immediate Effect of his Aſcenſion and Interceſſion. He then prayed the Father for his Diſciples, and has ſince for all ſincere Chriſtians, that he would give them *another Comforter, which ſhould abide with them for ever.* Thus, when he *aſcended up on high*, he not only *led Captivity captive*, but *received and gave Gifts unto Men, yea, even*

*even to his Enemies, that the Lord God might dwell amongſt them.* This is the *Firſt* great End and Deſign of our Lord's Aſcenſion: And,

The *Second* is like unto it, which was to prepare Places for all his faithful Servants in the heavenly Manſions. This likewiſe he expreſly aſſured his Diſciples of, for their great Comfort, when he was about to leave them—*Let not your Heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe alſo in me. In my Father's Houſe are many Manſions: If it were not ſo, I would have told you: I go to prepare a Place for you; and if I go and prepare a Place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myſelf, that where I am, there ye may be alſo.* Here we plainly ſee, that our Bleſſed Saviour aſcended into Heaven in a publick Capacity, not only to receive a Kingdom for himſelf, but to provide Manſions in his Father's Kingdom for all his Followers. And it is this that renders every Action of his of ſuch great Value and Conſequence, and which ought very much to endear them to us; ſince all of them were performed with a particular Eye to *our* Benefit and Advantage. We have a near, a very

very near Concern in all the great Tranſactions, and all the great Events relating to our Saviour, as well thoſe that are paſt, as thoſe that are to come; in his myſterious Incarnation and Birth, in his holy and exemplary Life, his meritorious Death and Paſſion, his glorious Reſurrection and Aſcenſion, and his ſeaſonable Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt: All which were deſigned for the Benefit of us Men, and of our Salvation. He was not born into the World, that he might live to himſelf alone, but that he might inſtruct us in the Will of his Father, and teach us the Way of God more perfectly; and by the united Force of the moſt excellent and divine Precepts, and of his own moſt exemplary Life and Converſation, guide and conduct us in the Ways of Holineſs and Happineſs. So again he ſubmitted to Death, not by any Neceſſity of Nature, or thro' any ſuperior Force of his Enemies; but that by his Death he might take out the Sting of Death, and make an Atonement for our Sins, that he might deliver us from the Wrath to come, and reſtore us to the Privilege of a bleſſed Immortality. In like manner, he roſe again from the Dead, not on his own account only,

only, but for *our* Benefit and *Juſtification*, and as the *Firſt-fruits of them that ſleep*. And ſo he aſcended into Heaven, not in a ſolitary way, or as a ſingle Perſon, but in the moſt publick manner, and as the Head and Repreſentative of the whole Body of the Faithful, to take Poſſeſſion of the Kingdom of Heaven for *them* as well as for himſelf, and to provide them Manſions in that glorious Kingdom; *whither*, as the Apoſtle obſerves, *the Forerunner is for us entered*. He is entered *for us*; he is entered as our *Forerunner*, which Word implies, that *we* ſhall follow him in due time; that is, at the laſt Day, when he *will come again, and receive us unto himſelf, that where he is, there we may be alſo*. There are ſeveral other gracious Effects of our Lord's Aſcenſion; but theſe more properly belong to

The *Third* General Head I propoſed to conſider, *viz.* The Behaviour of the Apoſtles on the Account, and immediately after his Aſcenſion — *And they worſhipped him, and returned to Jeruſalem with great Joy; and were continually in the Temple, praiſing and bleſſing God. Amen.* Which Words contain theſe three Particulars: 1. Their Act of Adoration

Adoration at the Time and Place of their Lord's Aſcenſion; 2. Their great Joy at the Thoughts of his Exaltation; and, 3. Their expreſſing this their Joy, by duly attending the Temple-Service at the Hours of Prayer, and there praiſing and bleſſing God.

*Firſt*, When the Apoſtles ſaw their Lord taken up from them, and carried into Heaven, and were further aſſur'd of this by the Meſſage of two Angels ſent directly to them for that Purpoſe, they then began to entertain more reverential and becoming Thoughts of the Dignity and Perſon of their Bleſſed Maſter; and teſtified this higher Degree of inward Veneration of him, by ſuitable Acts of outward Adoration. But what theſe were, or in what manner perform'd, it is not ſaid, but only in general, *that they worſhipped him*, which was, no doubt, with proper religious Worſhip: That is, upon ſeeing him aſcend into Heaven, they were not only more ſtrongly perſuaded, and more fully aſſured, of his being the Son of God; but likewiſe worſhipped him as ſuch; and him, whom but juſt before they had freely convers'd with, they now ſolemnly adored. So great and ſudden a Change did the Sight

and Thoughts of *Chriſt*'s Aſcenſion work in all his Apoſtles; as the full Demonſtration of his being riſen from the Dead, had done before in his doubting and diſbelieving Apoſtle in particular, when it extorted from him this ſhort and ſignal Confeſſion, *My Lord, and my God!* And ſomething of the like Acknowledgment we may ſuppoſe the Apoſtles made on occaſion of their Lord's Aſcenſion; perhaps not unlike that of *Eliſha*, when he cried out, upon *Elijah*'s being taken up into Heaven, *My Father, my Father! the Chariot of Iſrael, and the Horſemen thereof.* This is certain, that the Apoſtles were ſtruck with Admiration, and fill'd with Wonder, at their Lord's departing from them in ſo glorious and triumphant a manner, and could no longer with-hold from him that Adoration and Worſhip, which was *always* his Due: But their conſtant and free Converſation with him, and his great Courteſy and Condeſcenſion towards them, muſt needs have abated and taken off very much of that pious Awe and Dread, with which they were now deeply affected. They had indeed, *before*, a reverential Regard for his Perſon, were attentive to his Doctrine and Inſtructions, ready

ready to obey his Call, and to fulfil his Commands, and receiv'd his Reproofs with due Meekneſs and Submiſſion. But they don't appear *at all times* to have had ſo juſt and awful Sentiments of his Divine Nature, and of the infinite Dignity of his Perſon, as they had upon this Occaſion, when their Sight help'd to increaſe their Faith, and made them to *rejoice with trembling*. We find alſo that ſome of his Miracles had ſomething of the like Effect upon them, and gave them a ſtronger Conviction, and livelier Senſe, of his Divine Power; at the Sight of which they were often aſtoniſh'd, and fill'd with reverential Thoughts of his Perſon and Power, as the Mariners were at his ſtilling the Rage of the Sea, by only ſaying, *Peace, be ſtill!* upon which Occaſion, they cry'd out, *What manner of Man is this, that even the Winds and the Sea obey him?* But that which, next to the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, made the deepeſt and moſt laſting Impreſſion upon the Apoſtles, was *Chriſt*'s Exaltation to the Right-hand of God. This was the crowning and confirming Event, that which eſtabliſhed them in Faith and Love, that enliven'd their Devotion, and

warm'd their Hearts. For immediately upon this, they paid their Adorations to their glorified Saviour on Mount *Olivet*, and from thence *returned to Jeruſalem with great Joy*; which is

The *next* Particular to be conſidered. It may ſeem a little ſtrange at firſt, that the Apoſtles, who were ſo unwilling to leave their Lord, and ſo often dejected at the Thoughts of his leaving them, ſhould now at length be not only reconciled to his Departure, but able to entertain it with great Joy: But we need not wonder at this, if we conſider, on the other hand, how pleaſing and tranſporting it muſt needs be to them, to be fully ſatisfied of the Truth of his Divinity, and to ſee him carried up into the ineffable Glories of Heaven; and to be further aſſur'd, that he was gone before to prepare Places for them in thoſe Manſions of Bliſs, and at his ſecond Coming would receive them again to himſelf, and give them Poſſeſſion of the promiſed Inheritance; and in the mean time, would ſtand by them, and ſuſtain them in every Danger and Calamity they ſhould undergo on his account. So that the *greater* Power was given to him,

and

and the higher he was advanc'd, the greater Hopes and Aſſurance they muſt have of a mighty Protection from him here, and of a glorious Reward hereafter. Beſides, their *Love* to their bleſſed Maſter could not but oblige them on this Occaſion to rejoice with exceeding great Joy at the Thoughts of his ſupereminent Dignity, at the Aſſurance of *his* inconceivable Felicity, as well as with the Proſpect of *their own.* Nor could this Joy of theirs be confin'd within their own Breaſts, but was manifeſted in outward Acts of Piety, and the ſolemn Offices of Devotion; and brake forth, as Occaſions offer'd, into Songs of Praiſe and Thankſgiving. For as, after their Lord was taken up, they *returned to Jeruſalem with great Joy*; ſo, after their Return, they *were continually in the Temple, praiſing and bleſſing* God; which is

The *laſt* Particular I am to explain. But 'tis Practice that will beſt explain this to us. Were we affected with the *Remembrance*, as the Apoſtles were at the *Sight* of our Lord's Aſcenſion, we ſhould have much the ſame reverential Thoughts, and be as ready to give the Honour due to our glorified Saviour, as they were: We

ſhould then be more conſtant, regular, and uniform, in all the Acts and Offices of religious Worſhip: We ſhould *ſo remember* our Saviour's triumphant Entrance into Glory, as not to forget his bitter Paſſion and Sufferings for our ſakes: We ſhould ſo call to mind both his humble and glorified State, as not to be diſcourag'd or dejected at any Sufferings that may befal ourſelves: More particularly, we ſhould labour to preſerve the Memory of him freſh in our Minds, by all the Means and Methods, that are proper or appointed for that End. We commonly remember an abſent Friend or Benefactor with Satisfaction and Delight, eſpecially if he has left behind him ſome Token of his Love, whereby to remember him; and more eſpecially ſtill, if this Token be of ſuch a Nature, that we can't rightly uſe it, without being greatly benefited by it at the ſame time. And ſuch was the tender Care of this great Paſtor of the Church. That the great Things he had done and ſuffer'd for us might not be forgotten, or rendered ineffectual through Careleſſneſs and Ingratitude, *he has*, as our Church expreſſes it, *inſti-*

*tuted*

*tuted and ordained holy Myſteries as Pledges of his Love, and for a continual Remembrance of his Death, to our great and endleſs Comfort.* Theſe Myſteries he ordain'd the Night before his Paſſion; and though the Apoſtles did then partake of them at this firſt Inſtitution of them, and while he was *preſent* with them; yet we don't find, that for the forty Days of his Continuance upon Earth after his Reſurrection, they did once celebrate or partake of the Holy Euchariſt; the Reaſon of which might be, that the *general* Deſign of this ſacred Ordinance is to remember him *as abſent*, and not *as preſent*. But ſoon after the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon the Apoſtles, we have a plain Intimation, that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was celebrated by the firſt Converts to Chriſtianity, who are ſaid by St. *Luke* to have *continued ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles Doctrine, and in Fellowſhip, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayer*. And by *breaking of Bread*, is generally underſtood the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. If then we deſire to partake of the bleſſed Fruits of *Chriſt*'s Aſcenſion,

of the Graces and Comforts of the Holy Spirit, which were ſo abundantly beſtow'd on the Church on the Day of Pentecoſt; if we would have an Intereſt in the Merits of our Saviour's Death and Paſſion, and not be excluded the Benefits of his powerful Interceſſion; if we would ſhew our Gratitude to him in the beſt manner, and ſerve him in the moſt acceptable way; if we are really deſirous to advance in Piety and Goodneſs, and to promote and ſet forward our Salvation, we muſt often reſort to the holy Table, and make uſe of this moſt excellent Means of Grace, ordain'd for the Remembrance of a crucify'd Saviour, and for conveying to our Souls all the Benefits of his moſt gracious and glorious Undertaking for us. Let us then ſo remember him at this time, that he may be induced to remember us, when we ſhall ſtand moſt in need of his Help and Aſſiſtance; ſo think upon him now, that we may not be afraid or aſham'd to ſee him hereafter; and ſo confeſs him here before Men, that he may be ready to confeſs and receive us, when *he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with his holy Angels.*

*Now*

*Now to God the* FATHER, *God the* SON, *and God the* HOLY GHOST, *Three Perſons and One* GOD, *be aſcrib'd, as is moſt due, all Honour, Power, Dominion, and Praiſe, now and for evermore.* Amen.

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SERMON

# SERMON VIII.

*On* WHITSUNDAY.

The primitive Qualifications for Receiving, and the Extent of the Benefits implied in, the Promiſe of the HOLY GHOST.

# SERMON VIII.

## *On* WHITSUNDAY.

## The primitive Qualifications for Receiving, and the Extent of the Benefits implied in, the Promiſe of the HOLY GHOST.

ACTS ii. 38, 39.

*Then Peter ſaid unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins; and ye ſhall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt. For the Promiſe is unto you, and to your Children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call.*

THIS is the Concluſion of St. *Peter*'s Sermon on the Day of *Pentecoſt* to the unconverted *Jews*, after that he and the reſt of the

the Apoſtles were endued with Power from on high, and made Partakers of the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt: The Fame of which was ſoon ſpread over all the City, and brought together a vaſt Concourſe of religious *Jews* from all Parts, that were then at *Jeruſalem*, on account of the Feaſt. And when this great Multitude was come together, they were confounded and aſtoniſh'd, becauſe that every Man heard the Apoſtles ſpeak to him in his own Language: And St. *Luke* reckons up no leſs than fifteen different ſorts of People that were then aſſembled. And while they were all amaz'd and marvell'd at what had happen'd, and full of Dread and Admiration at what they ſaw and heard, *Peter* ſtood up with the Eleven, and declared to them, that this was no other than the Accompliſhment of an antient Prophecy, which he repeated, and explained, and applied to thoſe Days; and from thence took Occaſion to preach to them *Jeſus Chriſt*, in a plain, perſuaſive, and pathetical manner: And God was pleas'd to bleſs and proſper his preaching at this Time, and on this Occaſion, to ſo wonderful a Degree, that no leſs than three thouſand Souls were converted, and

and added to the Church. A quick and plentiful Harveſt! which was the firſt Eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian Church, and the means of ſpreading and propagating Chriſtianity to moſt Parts of the known World. Such was the bleſſed Effect, and diffuſive Influence, of the exact Accompliſhment of our Saviour's Promiſe to his Apoſtles, of ſending the Holy Spirit upon them not many Days after his Aſcenſion into Heaven: By which St. *Peter* was enabled to exert ſomewhat of his former Zeal, and to become a principal Agent and Inſtrument in this firſt great Converſion; who, being deeply affected with the former Part of his Diſcourſe, as well as with the preſent Miracle, and no leſs with a lively Senſe of their Sins, as fearing perhaps, leſt, ſome way or other, they had been acceſſary to the Crucifixion of *Chriſt*, began to addreſs themſelves to the Apoſtles in general, with ſomething of Earneſtneſs and Concern, ſaying, *Men and Brethren, what ſhall we do? Then Peter ſaid unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins; and ye ſhall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt. For the Promiſe is*

*unto*

*unto you, and to your Children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call.* In which Words are contain'd theſe two general Doctrines: (1.) That the moſt primitive Way and Means to obtain the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt, was *Repentance* and *Baptiſm*; and (2.) That the Promiſe of the Spirit was not confin'd to that *preſent* Generation, but extends and belongs to *all future* Generations ſucceſſively to the End of the World. And,

*Firſt*, Let us conſider, that the moſt primitive Way and Means to obtain the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt, was Repentance and Baptiſm—— *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins; and ye ſhall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt.* The Repentance here required of theſe firſt Converts to Chriſtianity, in order to their Admiſſion into the Chriſtian Church, and to qualify them for the Reception of the Holy Ghoſt, was not that large and ſolemn Repentance which has been required in After-times, and is now required of all Perſons as indiſpenſably neceſſary in all Caſes of *habitual* and *preſumptuous* Sin. For we find, that the ſame Day that St. *Peter* preach'd

preach'd unto them, they were *converted, repented, baptized, admitted into the Church, and received the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt:* And yet I think, we have no juſt Grounds to ſuppoſe, that this Repentance and Converſion of theirs, tho' produced and effected in a very ſhort Space of Time, was miraculous and inſtantaneous, or wrought in them by an irreſiſtible Power, and all of a ſudden. On the contrary, we have a plain Intimation from the Context, that the Perſons at this time converted were prepar'd beforehand, and in a ready Diſpoſition of Mind for ſuch Converſion; and only wanted to have their Prejudice remov'd as to the Truth of Chriſtianity, and to be fully convinced and ſatisfied, that *Jeſus was the Chriſt.* Which Conviction this Miracle of Tongues, and the Preaching of the Apoſtle, were the Means of producing in them. And that theſe Perſons were prediſpos'd for ſuch Converſion, is plain from the Account and Character which St. *Luke* gives of them, *v.* 15. — *And there were dwelling at Jeruſalem Jews, devout Men, out of every Nation under Heaven.* Theſe *devout Men*, hearing the Report of this great Miracle, aſſembled together at the

Place where the Apoſtles were, not merely out of Curioſity, but, as we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, with a pious and religious Intention; where they no ſooner beheld this wonderful Work, and heard the Words of eternal Life deliver'd to them by St. *Peter* in their own Language, but they were fill'd with a reverential and religious Awe, and earneſtly begg'd to be inform'd what they muſt do to be ſaved. Then *Peter* declar'd, that nothing more was neceſſary, than to repent of their Sins, (which they were now ſenſible of, more particularly of their rejecting hitherto the Evidence of *Chriſt*'s Miracles) and to profeſs their Belief of *Jeſus* as the true *Meſſiah*, by being baptized in his Name. And this was the very ſame Faith and Profeſſion, that *Philip* afterwards expreſly required of the *Eunuch*, who being ſufficiently inſtructed by this Evangeliſt in the Faith of *Chriſt*, aſk'd him, *What doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip ſaid, If thou believeſt with all thine Heart, thou mayſt. And he ſaid, I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God.* Upon which he was immediately baptized. But here we ſhould remember, that this great Officer under the Queen

Queen of *Ethiopia* was what the Scripture calls *a religious Proſelyte*; that is, he acknowledged the God of *Iſrael* for the true God, and worſhipp'd him as ſuch, tho' he did not ſubmit to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Jews*; and he had then been at *Jeruſalem* to pay his Adorations, and was returning in his Chariot, and reading *Iſaias* the Prophet, when *Philip* came and addreſs'd himſelf to him. Now a Man ſo piouſly inclin'd, and ſo devoutly employ'd, was in a ready Diſpoſition to embrace Chriſtianity. And accordingly God was pleaſed to ſend an extraordinary Meſſenger to him, to inſtruct him in the right Way, and to admit him into the Pale of the Church. The like may be obſerv'd of *Cornelius* the Centurion, and of almoſt all the other Converts we read of in the New Teſtament, who were well diſpoſed and duly prepared for the Reception of *Chriſt*, and of the Holy Ghoſt, by religious Principles, and a regular Practice in their own Way; and particularly by the Preaching of *John Baptiſt*, who was to prepare the way of the Lord, by *preaching the Baptiſm of Repentance*, or by preaching and baptizing Men, in order to Repentance. And

all or moſt of the Apoſtles, and ſeventy Diſciples choſen by our Lord, as 'tis generally ſuppoſed, were beforehand the Followers or Diſciples of *John* the Baptiſt; and ſo muſt be in a greater Readineſs of Mind to believe and acknowledge the *Meſſiah*, when, upon due Evidence, he ſhould be propounded to them. But the *Jews* who afterwards withſtood the Evidence of *Chriſt*'s Miracles, and the Teſtimony of the Apoſtles for the Truth of his Reſurrection, had *ſo much Guilt* to anſwer for, over and above what they had contracted before; and therefore, when many of the devouter Sort were made ſenſible of their Error in this reſpect, by the miraculous Gift of Tongues on the Day of *Pentecoſt*, they were then exhorted by the Apoſtles to repent of this Sin in particular; and their Acknowledging and Confeſſion of this, together with their previous good Diſpoſition, was accepted as ſufficient to qualify them for the Sacrament of Baptiſm, and for having a Part or Portion in the great and ſignal Bleſſing beſtow'd that Day upon the Church. The principal Condition *then* required was *Faith*, not only as neceſſary in itſelf, but as including Repentance likewiſe. For their great

great Sin was *Unbelief*, or not owning *Jeſus* to be the *Meſſiah*: But when they acknowledg'd this, they were eſteemed and accepted as Penitents, and made Partakers of the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghoſt.

But farther, theſe firſt Converts were not only exhorted to *repent, and be baptized*, but to be baptized *in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins*; which two Expreſſions will require a little Explanation. 1. To be *baptized in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt*, muſt either ſignify the being baptized by the Authority of, or according to the Commiſſion given the Apoſtles by, *Jeſus Chriſt*: Or elſe only One Perſon in the ſacred Trinity is mention'd, not as *excluding*, but as *implying* the other Two, which is a way of Expreſſion often made uſe of by the Writers of the New Teſtament. There might be no need to mention the *Father* and the *Spirit*, whom the *Jews* did acknowledge in general, but there was great Reaſon for mentioning the *Second Perſon* in particular, whom theſe new Converts had for ſome time rejected, and whom they now profeſs'd to believe as their *Meſſiah* or Saviour, and to whoſe Service they were to be de-

voted, by being baptized in his Name. We have no juſt Grounds to ſuppoſe, but that the Apoſtles conſtantly made uſe of the Form preſcrib'd them by their Lord, a little before his Aſcenſion---*Go ye, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*; tho' this Form be not particularly mention'd in the Account of any Baptiſm, that was afterwards adminiſtred by them. But we have a plain Intimation of this in the nineteenth Chapter of the *Acts*, where we read, that St. *Paul*, coming to *Epheſus*, and *finding certain Diſciples* there, *asked them whether they had received the Holy Ghoſt ſince they believed?* And upon their anſwering, that they had *not ſo much as heard, whether there be any Holy Ghoſt*; *he ſaid unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized?* Plainly ſignifying and implying by this Queſtion, that the uſual Form of Baptiſm was in the Name of the *Holy Ghoſt*, as well as of the *Father* and the *Son*; and therefore, if they had received true Chriſtian Baptiſm, they could not be ignorant of the *Name* and *Being* of the Holy Ghoſt. But, it ſeems, they had received only the Baptiſm of *John*.

But

But farther, theſe firſt Chriſtians were not only *baptized in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt*, or according to the Form preſcrib'd by him, but likewiſe *for Remiſſion of Sin. Repentance* was neceſſary to prepare them for Baptiſm; and *Baptiſm* to procure for them both Remiſſion of Sin, and the Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt. This the Apoſtle plainly and fully aſſerts---*Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the Remiſſion of Sins, and ye ſhall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt.* Repentance, without Baptiſm, (where that may be had) is not ſufficient to obtain the Pardon of Sin, and the Grace of God. And Baptiſm alone, without Repentance, (in Perſons capable of Repentance) will not be available to Pardon and Salvation. Both are required, and both together are always bleſſed with Efficacy and Succeſs. And what is here obſerv'd of one Sacrament, is applicable to the other. When the Soul is prepar'd, and put into a right State, by previous Acts of Repentance, *Baptiſm* and the *Lord's Supper* are the two ſacred Fountains, or ſolemn Ordinances, appointed by *Chriſt* himſelf, for waſhing and cleanſing us from the Guilt and Pollution both of actual and original Sin, and for con-

veying to us the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit. If we make a right Uſe and Improvement of theſe holy Inſtitutions, for the Ends and Purpoſes, for which they were deſign'd, we ſhall thereby be enabled to *ſerve God acceptably, and find Grace to help in time of Need.*

Having thus explain'd the former Part of my Text, I come now, in the *ſecond* Place, to conſider the latter Part, or the Nature and Extent of the Promiſe there made——*For the Promiſe is unto you, and unto your Children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God ſhall call.* The Promiſe here meant is that of the Spirit, which was given by the Father, and aſſured to the Apoſtles by the Son, as it is particularly ſet down, *Acts* i. 4. For *Chriſt being aſſembled together with them*, on the Day of his Aſcenſion, *commanded them, That they ſhould not depart from Jeruſalem, but wait for the Promiſe of the Father, which, ſaith he, ye have heard of me: For John truly baptized with Water, but ye ſhall be baptized with the Holy Ghoſt, not many Days hence.* This is the Promiſe St. *Peter* refers to, and this Promiſe includes both the ordinary and extraordinary

traordinary Gifts of the Spirit. That the former were to continue with the Church to the End of the World, is clear beyond all Diſpute: But whether the latter were deſign'd to be communicated to the Faithful in all Ages, is a Matter that has been aſſerted by ſome, and denied by others. If we argue the Caſe from bare Fact and Experience, 'tis certain that the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Spirit have not been common or apparent in every Age of the Church. But if we chooſe rather to argue this Point from the Reaſon of the Thing, and from the Tenor or Extent of the Promiſe here made, we may be inclin'd to think, that the *extraordinary*, as well as *ordinary* Gifts of the Spirit, were originally intended by God to have been imparted to the Church in all Ages, had there been no Obſtacle or Obſtruction on the Part of Chriſtians, to hinder or retard the Accompliſhment of this gracious Promiſe. 'Tis plain that St. *Peter* is ſpeaking of the *ſame* extraordinary Gifts, that were then beſtowed upon the Apoſtles on the Day of *Pentecoſt*; and the *Promiſe* of theſe Gifts, he tells the *Jews*, *is unto you, and to your Children, and to as many as the Lord*

*our*

*our God ſhall call.* That the Church has not all along been enlighten'd, repleniſhed, and beautified with theſe heavenly Gifts, can't be owing to any Defect of Goodneſs, or any Want of Inclination, on God's Part, who is wont to grant to his faithful Servants more than they deſire or deſerve, and to do for them exceeding abundantly above all that they can aſk or think. But for what particular Reaſons theſe miraculous Powers were at firſt withdrawn, and have ever ſince been diſcontinued to the Church of *Chriſt*, or when it ſhall pleaſe God to reſtore the Faithful to the Enjoyment again of theſe high Favours, and diſtinguiſhing Privileges, it may not be ſafe for us to inquire. The Methods and Diſpenſations of his Wiſdom and Juſtice are often unſearchable, and paſt finding out; and what we can't comprehend, we ſhould not preſume to examine, or to paſs any poſitive Judgment upon: Tho' I can't but think it proper, if not incumbent on the Faithful, to *pray* for the Reſtoration of theſe Gifts, (eſpecially conſidering that God is wont to ſuit his Succours to the Exigency of the Times) and to put themſelves into a Way or Method of Preparation for the Reception

of

of them. In the mean while, 'tis a Comfort to us to be aſſur'd in general, that the Promiſe of the Spirit, in the *ordinary* Way at leaſt, extends to all ſincere Chriſtians in all Times and Places, and that all uſeful Knowledge, and neceſſary Truth, and the ſaving Graces of the Spirit, have been convey'd down to the Faithful from Age to Age, and will never ceaſe ſo long as there ſhall be a Chriſtian Church upon Earth. And this muſt needs be matter of no ſmall Encouragement and Conſolation to all good Chriſtians, conſidering the abounding Iniquity of the Times, which give us too much Cauſe to fear, that God will at length be provok'd to withdraw his gracious Preſence, and deprive us of the ordinary Means of Comfort and Aſſiſtance: This, I ſay, we might juſtly dread from a Proſpect of the Times, and the Conſideration of our own Sins, did we not ſeaſonably remember, and relieve our Minds by, the Aſſurance given us in the Text, that the Promiſe of the Spirit to the primitive Chriſtians, was made not to them only, and to their Children, but to *all that were afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God ſhall call.* Now all the Promiſes of God are *Yea and Amen*, Truth

and

and Certainty itſelf. What he has promiſed, he will ſurely make good; and what he has ſaid, ſhall moſt certainly be fulfill'd. We have a ſignal Inſtance of the Truth of this in the Miracle of this Day, which was the Accompliſhment of our Saviour's Promiſe to his Diſciples. When he was going to leave them, he told them expreſly, that they ſhould be *baptized with the Holy Ghoſt not many Days hence.* He did not inform them of the *exact Day* when the Holy Ghoſt ſhould come to them, that they might every Day be in a Readineſs to receive him; nor would he defer the fulfilling of his Promiſe for *many Days*, leſt they ſhould be tempted to doubt of his Veracity, or faint and be diſcourag'd. They were not to begin their great Work, nor could they indeed be qualified for ſuch an Undertaking, *before* they had received the Promiſe of the Spirit, and were endued with Power from on high. They had long convers'd with their Saviour, and enjoy'd the Benefit of his heavenly Inſtructions, and the Advantage of his ſhining Example; and yet, notwithſtanding this, he tells them himſelf, *I have many things to ſay unto you; but ye cannot bear them now: Howbeit, when He, the Spirit*

*Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all Truth.* Their Lord's Inſtructions to them did only lay the Foundation, which the Holy Spirit was to build upon. And the Work they were to be employ'd in, *viz.* The Teaching and Converting all Nations, required the conſtant Exerciſe of ſupernatural Powers: The Benefit of which has reach'd even unto us; ſo that beſides the *ordinary* Aſſiſtance of the Spirit inſured to us by the Promiſe in my Text, we feel and experience likewiſe the happy and ſalutary Effects of thoſe *extraordinary* and miraculous Gifts, that were beſtowed upon the Apoſtles, as on this Day, which extend to us, and to our Children; and ſo help to fulfil the Promiſe or Prediction deliver'd by St. *Peter*, in a very beneficial, tho' not in the full Senſe of the Words. For as *their Sound went out into all Lands, and their Words unto the Ends of the World*, and to this Iſland in particular: So, unleſs *Chriſt* had fulfilled his Promiſe of ſending the Holy Ghoſt to his Apoſtles, we of this Nation, as well as others, muſt have remained in our antient State of *Paganiſm* and Idolatry, *Aliens from the Commonwealth of Iſrael, and Strangers to the Covenants of Promiſe, having no Hope,*

*Hope, and without God in the World.* Such had been our diſmal Caſe, without this Miracle of the Tongues, by which the Apoſtles were enabled to preach and propagate the Goſpel, or glad Tidings of Salvation, throughout the World. So much do we ſtand indebted to God for the Mercy and Miracle of this Day, (the beneficial Conſequences of which, extend to us and our Poſterity) as well as for that inward and ghoſtly Strength, and thoſe Supports and Conſolations, that are imparted to us from time to time, by the ſame Divine Spirit in the Uſe of the ſacred Ordinances appointed for that Purpoſe.

And now, if we would improve the Advantages we enjoy by means of the Chriſtian Inſtitutions, God would not leave us deſtitute of his ſpiritual Gifts, or of Grace to uſe them always to his Honour, and our own Good. The ſame Spirit that was ſent upon the Apoſtles, as on this Day, has been continued to the Church ever ſince, and ſanctified every true Member of the ſame. All thoſe mighty Atchievements, and high Attainments, we read of in the Lives of antient Saints, Martyrs, and Confeſſors, and other holy Perſons in latter Times, of the Victories and Triumphs of their

their Faith and Hope, of their heroick Piety, ardent and diffuſive Charity, and perſevering Conſtancy unto the End, were no other than the genuine Fruits, Effects, and Product of the powerful, but gentle Operations of the Holy Ghoſt. If therefore we would duly attend the Ordinances of *Chriſt*, and the Motions of the Spirit, and prepare ourſelves for the Reception of this Heavenly Gueſt, by previous Acts of Piety and Devotion, as the Apoſtles did by employing themſelves in Prayer and Supplication, and other holy Exerciſes, until they receiv'd this Promiſe of the Father, and were endued with Power from on high, we ſhould not fail of receiving the ſame Light and Inſtruction, the ſame Grace and Conſolation, that others have received before us. We ſhould then take the more earneſt Heed to the Things which we hear, leſt at any time we let them ſlip. We ſhould then hear the outward Word with Gladneſs, and have our Hearts open to the inward Teachings of the Holy Ghoſt. *Miniſters* are but Inſtruments of the Spirit, and he can employ what Inſtrument he pleaſes; and ſometimes makes uſe of the Meaneſt, *that the Excellency of the Power may be of God*,

*God, and not of Man.* What *we* ſpeak, we ſpeak only to the *Ear*, which from thence is convey'd to the Underſtanding and Memory. But our Words have no Power of themſelves to reach or affect the *Heart*. That belongs to the Office of the Holy Ghoſt. The Convictions of Conſcience are his Work. And therefore let none miſtake the Matter, or think to excuſe himſelf by accuſing the Inſtrument. The Operations of the Spirit in the preaching of the Word would be more viſible and effectual than they are, if they were not too often ſtifled and reſiſted. If they were but dutifully entertain'd, and obſequiouſly complied with; we ſhould ſoon ſee a happy and wonderful Change in the Hearts and Lives of Chriſtians.

Then, as to *Prayer*, as this can't be duly or acceptably perform'd, without the Aids and Aſſiſtances of the Spirit; ſo it is by the right Performance of this great Duty, that we are to obtain all thoſe Graces and Bleſſings we ſtand in need of. And a Man may as well hope to live without Breath, as to be able to live unto God, without frequent and fervent Prayer.

*Laſtly,*

*Laſtly*, With reſpect to the *bleſſed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, the Holy Spirit bears ſo great a Part in that whole Solemnity, that he may be looked upon as the principal Agent in it. As it was by *him*, that the Perſon officiating at this ſacred Ordinance was at firſt ſet apart to miniſter in holy Things; ſo it is by *him* that the Elements of Bread and Wine are conſecrated, and made in Myſtery and Efficacy the Body and Blood of *Chriſt*: And theſe outward Signs, even after Conſecration, will avail nothing, without the farther inward Working of the Spirit upon our Hearts. For our Saviour, ſpeaking of his *myſtical* Body in the Sacrament, plainly aſſerts, that *it is the Spirit that quickeneth; the Fleſh profiteth nothing. The Words that I ſpeak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are Life.* By which he ſeems to allow, that the *Bread* may be call'd his *Fleſh*, and the *Wine* his *Blood*, the Signs by the Things ſignified; but then affirms, that theſe *material* Things are not profitable in themſelves, but only as they are Means and Pledges of ſpiritual Bleſſings to be convey'd to the Soul, by Faith in him, and by the Operation of the Holy Ghoſt. And further, as 'tis the Holy Ghoſt that

makes this Sacrament effectual for all the Ends for which it was ordain'd: So the due receiving of the Sacrament, is the beſt and ſureſt Means we can take to receive the Holy Spirit likewiſe. 'Tis *here* that he beſtows upon us his manifold Gifts, and diſpenſes and diſtributes his ſaving Graces. 'Tis *here* that he enlivens our Faith and Hope, increaſes our Charity, ſtrengthens and refreſhes our Souls, and encourages our Perſeverance. Here then we may, in ſome meaſure, be ſaid to receive the Promiſe of the Father, and to be endued with Power from on high; with ſuch Power as is communicated to all the Faithful, and with ſuch as will enable us to overcome all the Enemies of our Peace and Happineſs, to work out our Salvation, and to obtain *an Inheritance among them that are ſanctified by Faith, which is in Chriſt Jeſus.*

*To whom, with the* FATHER, *and the* HOLY GHOST, *Three Perſons, and One* GOD, *be aſcrib'd, as is moſt due, all Honour and Glory, Adoration and Thankſgiving, now and for evermore.* Amen.

SER-

# SERMON IX.

## On TRINITY-SUNDAY.

## The Doctrine of the Ever-bleſſed TRINITY.

# SERMON IX.

## On *Trinity-Sunday.*

## The Doctrine of the Ever-bleſſed TRINITY.

2 COR. xiii. 14.

*The Grace of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghoſt, be with you all. Amen.*

THIS Form of ſolemn Benediction, with which the Apoſtle concludes his ſecond Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, is no obſcure Intimation of the great Article of Chriſtian Faith, which our Church teaches and makes Profeſſion of on this Day; *a Day* held ſacred and devoted

to the Honour and Service of the ever-bleſſed and all-glorious Trinity; which is moſt fitly and ſeaſonably commemorated at this Time. For after our Church had ſolemnized, in a due and regular Order, our Lord's Incarnation and Birth, his Circumciſion and Manifeſtation to the *Gentiles*, his Faſting and Temptation in the Wilderneſs, his Crucifixion, Death and Burial, his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion, ſhe then proceeded to celebrate the *Chriſtian Pentecoſt*, or the Holy Ghoſt's Deſcent upon the Apoſtles, and Manifeſtation to the World. And before this, the Doctrine of the Trinity was not, and could not be ſo fully known, as it has been ſince. But now, upon the Holy Ghoſt's making his Appearance on the Day of Pentecoſt by viſible Symbols, and in the moſt effectual and wonderful manner, a Trinity of Perſons in the Godhead has been clearly manifeſted and duly acknowledged by the Church ever ſince. The Perſons of the *Father* and of the *Son* were ſufficiently known and acknowledged before, and there were ſome Intimations likewiſe, and partial Diſcoveries, of the *Holy Ghoſt*: But it was his Miſſion upon the Apoſtles that firſt fully brought to Light,

or

or actually revealed to us, the Perſon, Power and Office of this Third Perſon in the Holy Trinity. And therefore the *Sunday* after his Deſcent has been ſet apart for the Profeſſion and Celebration of this great Myſtery.

Now this myſterious Doctrine is plainly implied in ſeveral Paſſages of Scripture, particularly in the Epiſtles, and, among the reſt, in that of my Text——*The Grace of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghoſt, be with you all. Amen.* From which Words, and other parallel Places, I ſhall (1.) Endeavour to explain and confirm the Doctrine of the Trinity, with reſpect to its Truth, Certainty, and Importance: And (2.) I ſhall conſider the Nature and Extent of the Mercies and Bleſſings wiſhed and prayed for in this ſolemn Form of Benediction.

With reſpect to the *Firſt*, we may obſerve, That here are three Perſons diſtinctly mentioned, two of them under their proper Names, *the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, and *the Holy Ghoſt*; and the other, which is the *Father*, is, by way of Eminence, ſtyled *God*, as being the Firſt in Order of Nature, or the Head and Fountain of the Godhead. Here then

you may obſerve, that there are more Perſons in the Godhead than One, and not more than Three. Theſe Three are not mentioned here in their natural Order, but according to the Order of our Redemption. For it was *the Grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, or his merciful and gracious Undertaking, that firſt procured for us the *Love of God the Father*; and it was both the *Grace* of *Chriſt*, and the *Love* of the *Father*, that afterwards procured *the Communion of the Holy Ghoſt*. And theſe three Spiritual Bleſſings, which the Apoſtle implores and wiſhes to the *Corinthians*, and to all Chriſtians, import the Divinity of the Perſons from whom they proceed. For as they are *prayed for*, they ſhew that the Perſons *prayed to* are the true and proper Object of Divine Worſhip. For who can hear Prayer, and give a Bleſſing, but God only? And as all Bleſſing in general comes from God, and every Form of Bleſſing muſt run in his Name; ſo the particular Bleſſings here to be beſtowed, are Gifts and Favours truly divine, and ſuch as no mere Creatures are able to confer, as may appear when I come to explain the Particulars. At preſent I only obſerve, that here is expreſs

Mention

Mention of a Trinity of Perſons, and each of theſe Perſons ſtrictly and properly Divine; and as all of them together, ſo every Perſon by himſelf, is a true and proper Object of religious Worſhip.

This Diſtinction of Three Divine Perſons is farther obſervable at the Time of our Lord's Baptiſm; when the Son appeared in the River *Jordan*, the Holy Ghoſt deſcended in the Shape of a Dove, and lighted upon him; and the Father declared his full Acquieſcence in him by a Voice from Heaven—— *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed.* We cannot well have a clearer and fuller Teſtimony than this. The *Father* bears Witneſs of himſelf and of his Son, by an audible Voice: The *Holy Ghoſt* appears by a viſible Sign, and by that Sign bears Witneſs of *Chriſt*, and of himſelf to *John, the Baptiſt.* For *John bare Record, ſaying, I ſaw the Spirit deſcending from Heaven like a Dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not; but he that ſent me to baptize with Water, the ſame ſaid unto me, Upon whom thou ſhalt ſee the Spirit, deſcending and remaining on him, the ſame is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghoſt. And I ſaw and bear*

*Record,*

*Record, that this is the Son of God.* Here again is another Teſtimony from the *Baptiſt*, of the Father which ſent him to baptize, of the Son that was baptized by him, and of the Holy Ghoſt which he ſaw deſcending and remaining on him.

Another Paſſage, in which we have the Mention of a Diſtinction or Trinity of Perſons, is our Saviour's Promiſe to his Diſciples of the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt——*I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter, who ſhall abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth.* By promiſing them *another Comforter*, he intimated, that he himſelf had been their Divine Comforter hitherto; and that the Comforter which ſhould be ſent to them by the Father after his Departure, was a Perſon not inferior in Nature to himſelf. And indeed his *Office* ſpeaks his Divinity, had we nothing elſe to prove it by. For to change and ſanctify the corrupt Nature of Man, to renew the Image of God upon his Soul, to *quicken them that were dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*, and to prepare them for a State of Glory, is as great an Act of Omnipotence, as creating Man at firſt out of the Duſt of the Earth, or raiſing him

hereafter out of the Grave. And if from hence it appears, that the Holy Ghoſt is truly God, the Son, who purchaſed and procured him for us, and ſent him to us, cannot be ſuppoſed to be of a Nature inferior to him. Here then is another plain Proof of Three Perſons equally and eſſentially Divine.

The ſame may be inferred from what St. *Paul* affirms in the following Words---*There are Diverſities of Gifts, but the ſame Spirit; and there are Differences of Adminiſtrations, but the ſame Lord; and there are Diverſities of Operations, but it is the ſame God, which worketh all in all.* Here again the Three Perſons in the Godhead are plainly diſtinguiſhed, the *Spirit* by Name, the *Son* by the Word *Lord*, and the *Father* by the Title of *God*. Here again the Order of Nature is not obſerved, unleſs it be by way of Aſcent from the Laſt to the Firſt, the Spirit being mentioned firſt, and the Father the laſt. And the Works or Offices, which they are here ſaid to perform, tho' different in Expreſſion, do ſo nearly reſemble one another in Effect or Reality, that 'tis hard to diſtinguiſh one from the other. One is called *Diverſities of Gifts*, the ſecond *Differences of Adminiſtrations*,

*tions*, and the third *Diverſities of Operations*: So frequently and familiarly does the Scripture ſpeak of the ſtrict Union and Agreement between theſe Three Sacred Perſons, that we cannot but believe that they are ſo far *one and the ſame*, as no other Perſons in the World are beſides; and at the ſame time ſo far *diſtinct*, that each of them acts *in* and *by* himſelf, as well as *jointly* with the other Two.

Another ſtrong and lively Proof of this Doctrine, both as to its Truth and Certainty, and as to its Neceſſity and Importance, is the Form of Words uſed in Baptiſm. Here the Three Perſons are mentioned in their regular and natural Order; and every one that is baptized, is baptized in the Name of each Perſon diſtinctly, and of all Three jointly, and thereby equally dedicated and devoted to the Service and Worſhip of all Three. And further, thoſe that are duly baptized, are waſhed from the Guilt of Sin, are born again of Water and of the Spirit, are made Members of Chriſt, and Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven: All which great Privileges and Benefits can come from none but God; and ſince theſe are here inſured in the Name, and

beſtowed

beſtowed on the Baptized by the joint Concurrence, of all Three Perſons, this is a plain undeniable Argument, that all Three are of the ſame Divine Nature, *co-eternal together and co-equal.* Thus has our Bleſſed Saviour made this Doctrine the firſt Principle of his Religion, by obliging all to profeſs and acknowledge it at their Entrance upon Chriſtianity, and their firſt Admiſſion into his Church by Baptiſm. They are baptized in the Name, and into the Profeſſion, of the Trinity; and unleſs they believe that each of theſe Perſons, from whom they expect ſuch great Things, as the Pardon of Sin, and eternal Life, is truly and properly God, I can't ſee of what Avail their Baptiſm can be to them. For to deny the eſſential Divinity of *either*, is to loſe and forfeit the Favour of *all:* Not to inſiſt, that the Efficacy of the Sacrament is hereby deſtroyed, and the Covenant between God and Man, of which this Sacrament is a Seal, intirely made void, by leaving out One or Two of the contracting Parties; which is done, in effect, by ſuſpecting or denying their Power to make good what they have promiſed or engaged themſelves, on their Part, to perform; *namely*, to beſtow

beſtow Pardon, Grace and Salvation, which none can beſtow but God alone.

But ſtill ſome may urge, that tho' there is frequent and plain Mention of Three Divine Perſons in Scripture, and that there ſeems to be no Difference or *Inequality of Nature* between them; yet it does not ſufficiently appear to us, that theſe Three are but one God, or *how* that can be. As to the *Manner* of its being, this is beyond the Reach of our preſent Comprehenſion: But that it *really* is ſo, we are fully aſſured by the Word of God: Nay, Reaſon itſelf plainly teaches us, that there can be but One God, becauſe there can be but One infinite Being. The firſt Notion we have of God, is, that he is infinite in all Perfection. Two Infinites therefore are an utter Impoſſibility in Fact, and the greateſt Contradiction in Theory. For Infinite includes and ſuppoſes the utmoſt Poſſibility of Perfection, or that nothing can be added to it, to make it more perfect. And this neceſſarily infers the Unity of the Divine Nature, which is infinite in all manner of Perfection, and therefore neither wants, nor can admit of, any Addition or Multiplication. So that a Plurality of Gods is a plain Contradiction

diction to Reaſon, as well as the greateſt Abſurdity in Religion; and therefore it is, that the Scriptures both of the Old and New Teſtament, do ſo frequently and ſo earneſtly preſs and inculcate this Truth, that there is, and that there can be, but One God. But then they as evidently aſſert, that there are Three Divine Perſons, diſtinguiſhed from one another by perſonal Properties, and by particular Qualities and Offices peculiar to each; that is, the ſame Divine Nature, of which all are Partakers, is common to all Three: But how they ſubſiſt in one and the ſame Eſſence, and how they are diſtinct from each other, is more than our preſent Faculties are able to conceive. But that there is ſuch an Unity of Eſſence, and ſuch a Diſtinction of Perſons in that Eſſence, is not only deducible from what has been already obſerved, but likewiſe clearly and fully aſſerted by St. *John*, in that remarkable Paſſage---*There are Three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt; and theſe Three are One*; that is, one Thing, one Being, one Subſtance, one Eſſence. Theſe are the *Three that bear Record in Heaven*; that is, they have not only borne Witneſs all along, in every

every Age of the World, and will to the End of it; the *Father* under the old Diſpenſation, the *Son* at the Beginning of the new, and the *Holy Ghoſt* ever ſince, or during the Goſpel-Diſpenſation; but they ſtill continue to bear Witneſs both jointly and ſeverally to the ſacred Truths revealed to Mankind, and more particularly to the Truth of their own *Divinity*, *Unity*, and *Perſonality*. The Father bears Witneſs of his Son and Spirit, the Son of the Spirit and of the Father, and the Spirit of the Father and of the Son: And the united Teſtimony of all Three concurs in this, that *Jeſus* is the true and only Son of God, and Saviour of the World; and that what he has delivered to us in the Goſpel, is the Word and Will of his Father. And *if we receive the Witneſs of Men*, ſays St. *John*, *the Witneſs of God is greater*. If the Witneſs of three Men is looked upon as valid and unexceptionable, how awful and venerable ought we to eſteem the Witneſs of the Three Divine Perſons, *the Father*, *the Word*, *and the Holy Ghoſt!* *It is written in your Law*, ſays our Saviour to the *Jews*, *that the Teſtimony of two Men is true. I am one that bear Witneſs of myſelf; and the Father that*

*ſent*

*ſent me, beareth Witneſs of me.* And here the *Holy Ghoſt* is joined with the *Father* and the *Son* in the ſame Divine Teſtimony, that becauſe they could teſtify by no greater Witneſſes, they might teſtify by themſelves, that *they Three are One.* For this very Paſſage ought to be looked upon as a Part of their Teſtimony, as well as any other Paſſage of Holy Writ. And this is ſo bright and glaring an Evidence for the Truth of the Doctrine I am defending, the Doctrine of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, that 'tis no Wonder if the Devil endeavoured from the Beginning to eclipſe and obſcure its Brightneſs, by cauſing it to be denied by ſome, and to be ſuſpected and diſputed by others. The Objection againſt it is, that 'tis wanting in moſt of the antient *Greek* Copies, and quoted by none of the antient *Greek* Fathers. But to this 'tis anſwered, That 'tis cited by *ſome* of the *Greek* Fathers, by *Athanaſius* in particular, and inſerted in ſome of the firſt Editions of the *Greek* Teſtament, after the Invention of Printing; which is a plain Proof, that the Manuſcripts which had this Text, were more in Number, or judged to be of greater Authority, than thoſe that wanted it. It has

been farther obſerved, that the old *Latin* Verſion, which is more antient than any *Greek* Manuſcript that is now extant, had this Paſſage in it; and by Conſequence, the old *Greek* Copy, from whence the Verſion was made, muſt have had it likewiſe. And that it was inſerted in the old *Latin* Verſion, is plain, from the expreſs Mention of it by two of the antient *Latin* Fathers, who muſt be ſuppoſed to have taken it from thence. And the Teſtimony of two ſuch early Authors is of more Force, and more to be regarded, than the Silence of Thouſands that come after them; ſince the Silence of theſe, and the Omiſſion of the Text, may very eaſily be accounted for, as ſhall be ſhewn by-and-by; but no tolerable Reaſon can be given for its being fraudulently inſerted by the Orthodox Chriſtians. They had no Occaſion for any ſuch Forgery, could we ſuppoſe their Intention or Inclination to have been ſo corrupt. There were other ſufficient Proofs in Scripture of the ſame Point. Our Saviour himſelf aſſerts the very ſame thing of his Father and himſelf; *I and my Father are One*, one Being, one Subſtance, as the Original imports. And ſurely 'tis no more Con-

Contradiction or Inconſiſtency to ſay, that *Three are One*, than to ſay, that *Two are One*. Beſides, the Church, as is commonly ſuppoſed, was then ſo faithful a Keeper of that ſacred *Depoſitum*, the Holy Scriptures, that ſhe endeavoured, what ſhe could, to prevent any Difference in the Copies, or any various Readings; and therefore, to be ſure, would not wilfully ſuffer or connive at any *manifeſt* Addition, or Interpolation, or Diminution; tho' it was much eaſier then to have curtailed the Scripture, than to have added to it. A Man may loſe ſome Part of his Subſtance, and not miſs it for a time, or till he has Occaſion to make uſe of it; but if he finds any thing in his Cuſtody or Poſſeſſion, that he knows does not belong to him, if he be uprightly inclined, he will preſently make Inquiry *whoſe* it is, and *how* it came thither. Whenever then we ſuppoſe this Text to have been foiſted into St. *John*'s firſt Epiſtle, ſome or other of thoſe Chriſtians that were then daily converſant in the Scriptures, muſt very ſoon have diſcovered this new Paſſage; and upon ſuch Diſcovery, would have given the Alarm to the whole Church, which would never have ſuffered a *ſuppoſititious* Text to

have paſs'd for *Canonical*, tho' never ſo agreeable to her own Tenets, or expreſſive of the Doctrine ſhe profeſs'd. There were no pious Frauds among the Catholicks in thoſe early Days: And a prepoſterous and irreligious Zeal brings no Honour to God. He ſtands in no need of Man's Wiſdom, or of Man's Devices, for the Revelation, Eſtabliſhment, or Confirmation of any ſacred Truth. The primitive Chriſtians abhorred the Thoughts of *doing Evil, that Good might come of it*: They had juſter Notions of God and themſelves, than to *talk wickedly*, or write *deceitfully* for him. Whenever therefore we imagine that this Text was inſerted, it could not be long before it was diſcovered. So remarkable a Paſſage, concerning ſo very important a Point of Doctrine, muſt neceſſarily force itſelf upon every Reader's Obſervation and Memory. And when it came to be diſcover'd, 'tis moſt reaſonable to conclude, that it would immediately have been cenſured, rejected, and diſcarded. For 'tis not to be imagined, that the Catholick Church would have conſented to the retaining a Text that was known to have been *ſuppoſititious* or *unſcriptural*. For theſe Reaſons 'tis, I think, altogether

altogether improbable, if not morally impoſſible, that this Paſſage, if *ſuppoſititious*, ſhould have been inſerted at firſt, and afterwards countenanc'd and retain'd by Orthodox Chriſtians. To which let me add the Opinion of our own Church in this Matter. For that theſe Words properly belong to the Epiſtle where they are placed, and are included in the *Canon* of Scripture, our Church has plainly or implicitly determin'd, by chooſing and appointing this very Chapter for the ſecond Leſſon for the Evening Service of this Day: And the only Reaſon of her Choice, in this Caſe, muſt be the Paſſage under Conſideration, which is ſo clear and explicit an Acknowledgment of the Doctrine of the Trinity. Which ſhews that ſhe firmly believ'd, and was fully perſuaded, that theſe Words are *genuine* and *canonical* Scripture. And in all doubtful Caſes (and eſpecially in a Caſe that is more *evident* than *dubious*) we ought to acquieſce in her Judgment and Determination.

As I have thus endeavour'd to clear the early Chriſtians from fraudulently inſerting a Paſſage in Scripture, that did not originally belong to it: So I would not charge the He-

reticks of thoſe Times, with what can't directly be proved upon them, *viz.* with a Deſign of expunging or leaving this out. For the Omiſſion in ſo many Copies may otherwiſe very eaſily be accounted for. The ſeventh and eighth Verſes beginning with the very ſame Words, *There are Three that bear Witneſs*, a Tranſcriber might, after writing thoſe firſt Words, by an Error of the Eye, readily paſs on to the remaining Part of the eighth Verſe, inſtead of the remaining Part of the ſeventh, by which means the whole ſeventh Verſe might come to be left out. And unleſs this Verſe had been the true original Reading, the Mention of the Witneſſes *on Earth*, (as has been often obſerv'd on this Occaſion) had been ſuperfluous; for theſe only anſwer to the Witneſſes *in Heaven*. Now one wrong or imperfect Copy, in this reſpect, was enough to introduce the ſame Error or Omiſſion in many others, yea, in all that were written after. But if this Paſſage were wrongfully inſerted at firſt, it muſt have been either by Deſign, or thro' Ignorance, or Miſtake, or mere Accident. But that it could not be done *by Deſign*, I have given, I hope, ſufficient Reaſons; and 'tis

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ſtill much more unlikely, that this ſhould happen thro' *Ignorance*, *Miſtake*, or *mere Accident*.

What I have ſaid on this Occaſion, may perhaps appear to ſome too trifling and inconſiderable to be ſo particularly inſiſted on: But whatever they may think, 'tis really a matter of the greateſt Conſequence and Importance, as tending to eſtabliſh a fundamental Doctrine, that has unhappily occaſion'd ſo much Controverſy and Diſpute in the Chriſtian World, and to give our Minds the fulleſt Eaſe, Aſſurance, and Satisfaction, in a Point of as high Moment, and of as great Concern, as any one doctrinal Point in the whole Bible. And if we are obliged in general to contend earneſtly for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints, certainly we are obliged to do ſo for that particular Branch of Faith, that is ſo clearly and fully teſtified, and comes to us under the Stamp and Seal of ſuch awful Authority. If the Teſtimony of *Men*, in relation to the Affairs of this Life, is not to be ſet aſide, upon ſome few Exceptions being made to their Evidence, that may eaſily be anſwer'd; ſhall we be content to ſet aſide, or tamely give up, ſuch a Divine Teſtimony

as this, that relates to the Knowledge of the True God, and to our Security from the great Sin of Idolatry, in ſerving and worſhipping more Gods than One, or *Creatures* inſtead of God? But while we have this Paſſage, we are ſafe from all Fear or Danger this way. For there are no Words, I believe, poſſible to be invented or thought of, that can more clearly, more fully, and more expreſly, aſſert a Divine Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, than theſe Words do—— *There are Three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt, and theſe Three are One*; one Eſſence, or Subſtance, which is the peculiar Property of the *Divine Nature*. The angelical, the human, and all created Subſtances or Natures are divided, and as diſtinct as the ſeveral Individuals which partake of them. But the Divine Nature is one ſimple indiviſible Subſtance, of which Three Perſons only are Partakers, and that jointly and equally: *How* or in what manner, is not reveal'd; nor are our preſent Faculties proportion'd to ſuch a Diſcovery, if it had been made. Nothing can be plainer, and more intelligible, than the *Truth* and *Reality* of the Thing; and nothing more ſublime

lime and incomprehenſible, than the *Modus* or Manner of it. But this is what at preſent we are not concern'd to know or inquire after. We are only to believe, that there are Three Divine diſtinct Perſons, and but One God; and for this the Words I have been conſidering, are fully and abundantly ſufficient.

I have dwelt ſo long upon my firſt general Head of Diſcourſe, that I have left myſelf but little room for the other, under which I propos'd to conſider the Nature and Extent of the Apoſtolical Benediction, deliver'd in this Form; *The Grace of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghoſt, be with you all. Amen.* I ſhall only therefore obſerve in few Words, *firſt*, as to the *Nature* of an Apoſtolical Benediction, that here both the Means and the End meet together, the Prayer and the Thing pray'd for. For ſuch Bleſſing was not barely *verbal*, but attended with *Efficacy* and *Succeſs*. The Apoſtles in ſuch Forms did not only pray for Bleſſings upon Chriſtians, but were Inſtruments in the Hands of God, of deriving the Bleſſings they pray'd for, upon all that were qualified to receive

them; which rendered their Authority amiable and venerable. While our Saviour was with his Apoſtles, and when he ſent them out to preach, he gave them this Charge among others——*Into whatſoever Houſe ye enter, firſt ſay, Peace be to this Houſe. And if the Houſe be worthy, let your Peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your Peace return to you. And whoſoever ſhall not receive you, nor hear you, when you depart thence, ſhake off the Duſt under your Feet for a Teſtimony againſt them.* So that, as Men receiv'd or rejected the Inſtruments which God choſe, and made uſe of, for conveying his Bleſſings to the World; ſo they did either promote or obſtruct their own Intereſt and Salvation. Then, as to the *Extent* of this Benediction, it includes and comprehends all that we can wiſh, or deſire, or pray for; *the Grace of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt* importing all thoſe Mercies, Favours, and Privileges, that are promiſed and made over to us by the Covenant of Grace; all thoſe ineſtimable Benefits and Advantages, which *Chriſt* by his precious Blood-ſhedding hath obtain'd to us. And *the Love of God* ſignifies his Good-will and Reconciliation to us, thro'

thro' the gracious Undertaking, and meritorious Sufferings, of our Bleſſed Redeemer. And this alone is a Fountain of Good: We can deſire nothing beyond it: To have this, is to poſſeſs all Things. The *Love of God* towards us, will ſupply us with all that we can want. *In his Pleaſure is Life*, yea, *his Loving-kindneſs is better than Life itſelf*: 'Tis an ever-flowing Spring of Joy and Comfort, ſpringing up into everlaſting Life. 'Tis a full Senſe of God's Love that makes the Happineſs of Heaven; and 'tis ſome little Foretaſtes of it here, that muſt ſupport and ſuſtain us in our weariſome Pilgrimage thro' this World; and tho' here he often corrects thoſe whom he loves, and chaſtiſes every one whom he deſigns to receive; yet whether his Love be diſpens'd in a way of Gentleneſs, or Severity, we may be ſure, that 'tis always attended with a *Bleſſing*, and deſign'd for our Benefit and Advantage. And, laſtly, *The Communion of the Holy Ghoſt* denotes our ſpiritual and gradual Improvement in the Ways of Piety and Virtue, under the Guidance, Direction, and Influence of the Bleſſed Spirit, who is the conſtant Inſtructor, Sanctifier, and Comforter of all the Faithful. And

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to have Communion with him, is to have Communion likewiſe, in ſome meaſure, with the Father and the Son, as St. *John* intimates—*And truly our Fellowſhip is with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt:* Tho' this latter will not be fully enjoy'd, till we come to ſee God as he is: 'Tis the former that is the peculiar and diſtinguiſhing Privilege of our preſent State. Here we have *the Communion of the Holy Ghoſt*; and were we duly ſenſible how unworthy we are of ſo high a Favour, and rightly underſtood how much it imports, we ſhould be more earneſt in ſeeking for it, and more careful to retain it, when we have it. For to enjoy the *Communion of the Holy Ghoſt*, is to have a *kind Monitor* always at hand, to remind us of our Duty; an *all-wiſe Teacher*, to guide us into all ſaving Knowledge, and neceſſary Truth; a *faithful Friend*, to warn us of any Danger, and to reprove us for our Sins and Follies; a *Divine Comforter*, to ſupport us with inward Joy and Conſolation, in the midſt of outward Preſſures and Calamities; a *ready Aſſiſtant*, to help our Infirmities, and teach us both how and what to pray; a *powerful Advocate*, to plead our Cauſe, and

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to intercede for us; a *holy Reformer*, to ſanctify and cleanſe us, to rectify the Diſorders of our Nature, and to purify our Hearts by Faith; and a *ſure infallible Guide*, to direct us in all our Paths, and to conduct us ſafely, by the Way of Peace and Holineſs, to our heavenly Country, to our eternal Reſt, to the Land of Promiſe, to the Communion and Fruition of a Tri-une God, *in whoſe Preſence there is Fulneſs of Joy, and at whoſe Right-hand there is Pleaſure for evermore.*

*Now to this Holy and Undivided Trinity,* FATHER, SON, *and* HOLY GHOST, *Three Perſons and One* GOD, *be aſcrib'd, in all Churches of the Saints, all Honour and Glory, Adoration and Thankſgiving, now and for ever.* Amen.

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*The End of* VOL. I.

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